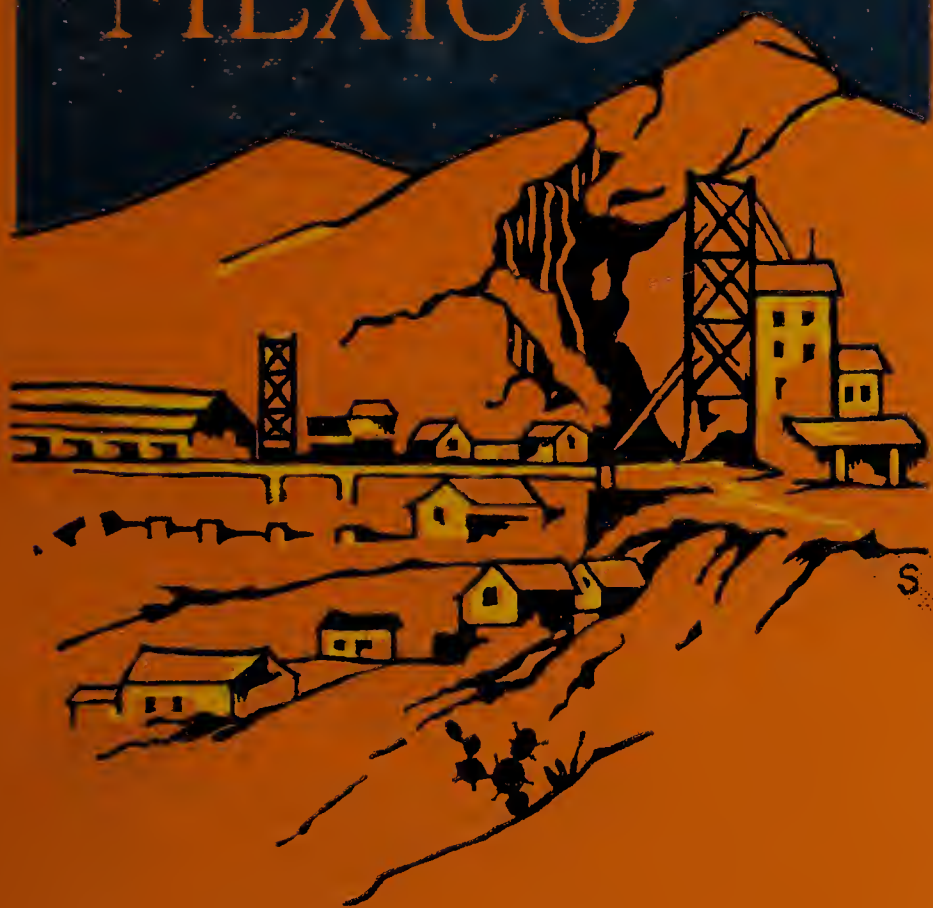


IN and UNDER MEXICO



Ralph M^cA. Ingersoll

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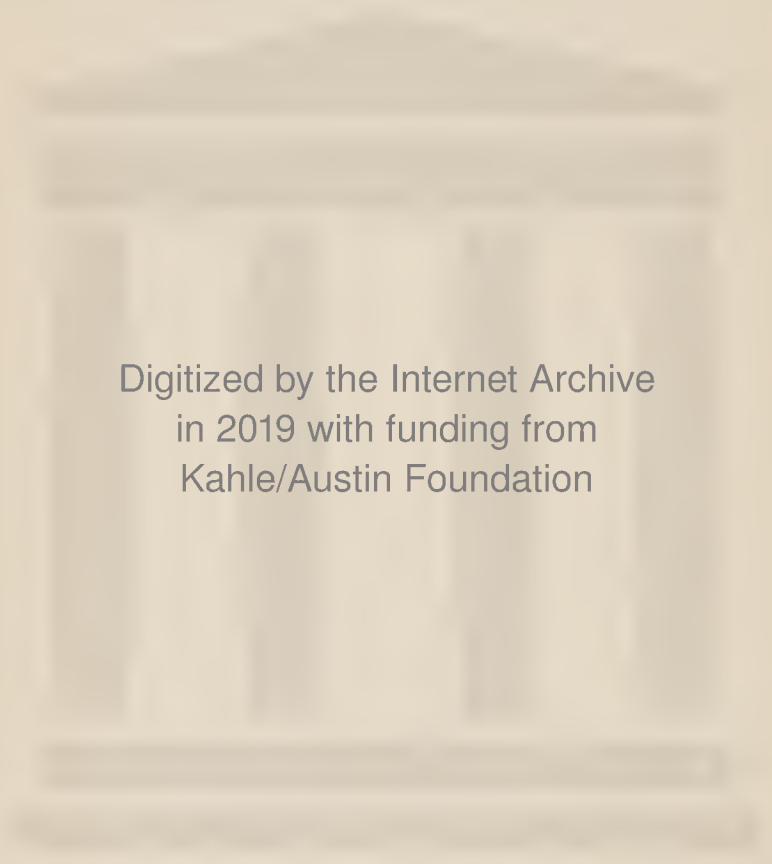
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IN AND UNDER MEXICO

EL MONTE DE COBRE



IN AND UNDER MEXICO

BY
RALPH McA. INGERSOLL

ILLUSTRATED WITH
PHOTOGRAPHS



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TO LUCIE

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DEDICATED

what is left of this book
after her happy pencil
finished with it

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IN AND UNDER MEXICO

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CHAPTER I

HEADIN' SOUTH

SEATED on top of my vast pile of luggage, in the rear part of a very excitable little Ford truck, at nine o'clock of a hot New Year's morning, I rolled out of the U. S. A. and through the concrete portals that told me I was entering Mexico. I rolled out from under the pall of sulphur-laden smoke that hangs eternal over the smelter town on the border, and into the scattered handful of adobe shops and frame cabarets which is advertised by its own chamber of commerce as the "Gateway to the Treasureland of Mexico."

For a year and a half I had been working underground, in mines on the American side of the border, getting the "experience and psychology of the laborer" that seems to be the supreme test of young mining engineers. And then one day, when I came blinking up out of the darkness, I found waiting for me, from the company I was working for, a transfer to one of its copper-mines in Mexico.

“What kind of a job is it?” I asked my superintendent.

“Lord knows,” was his answer; “it’s probably a dozen jobs, down there!”

So I thought to myself of a “white-collar” position, “on top,” and of the famous “señoritas,” and I packed up my troubles and set forth.

I finished out the old year in the border town, and thoroughly enjoyed the extra day, or night, I spent there. Copper, which is the life-blood of the community, was deadlier then than the glory that was Egypt, and everybody seemed to be very busy drowning the memory of it. There is a curious unwritten law at this point that alcohol is man’s inherent right but boot-legging is an abomination. I noticed that every car was stopped and searched as it came to the American side of the line, and I saw one man, who had six cases of champagne in the back seat, arrested; but time and again I watched drivers with bulging pockets, and even suspicious-looking bundles in their laps, and saw the officials smile and motion them to drive on. No wholesale trading was allowed, but smuggling for personal consumption was another matter. The rule was the most sensible I have run into anywhere along our borders.

But this is not getting on with my story. On that New Year’s morning, beyond a certain reminiscent



A SUNNY MORNING IN THE MEXICAN TOWN
(Note the noonday crowds in the patio)

effect of the previous evening, I was thinking very little of boot-leggers and a great deal of the exoticism of the atmosphere that surrounded me the minute my carriage of state drew up over the border. I don't know of a single arbitrary line that one can cross in this world, with the possible exception of the imaginary one between Brooklyn and New York, that gives a greater feeling of contrast than the border between the two North American republics.

Busy, hustling, paved streets, "Broadway" illumination, trolley cars and jitneys gave place to dusty, wide avenues, quite asleep and lined with little open shops decorated in front with long garlands of strange-colored dried eatables. (I suppose they were eatable, although just then I should have hated to experiment!) Within the shops were sleek, oily Chinamen, the tradesmen; and without, lounging about and looking for all the world as if they had been transferred from a moving-picture "set," the Mexicans. The men wore bright colors and appeared listless; the women, in black, were nosing around and handling the wares displayed. The whole scene was thrown into slow motion, too. It seemed impossible that anything could be done in a hurry, until I got to the custom-house in the diminutive railroad station and one of the officials began to talk to me. In his speech there didn't seem to be any conservation of energy!

To begin with, I did n't know a word of Spanish; I was coming to the country to learn it. So I planked my luggage down, seated myself upon it, and folded my arms. I 'm quite sure that the inspector, who was a big brigand with a ten-quart hat, a ferocious mustache, and two six-shooters, told me his life story at least ten times. The experience was a sad beginning to an adventure, and I should be sitting there still had it not been for the timely arrival of aid; for it turned out that no one in the station, five hundred yards from the United States, spoke a word of English. The aid came in the form of a little Texan who proved to be the clerk of the company hotel in Cobre, the camp I was bound for. He proceeded to shake everybody's hand and pass out a few cigars, and in five minutes, without the opening of a bag, the bandit had, with indelible-chalk scribbling, ruined my perfectly good suit-case, and we had passed the customs.

The railroad was a company line running from the smelter on the border to the mill town of Cobre, a little over a hundred miles south. From my new companion I learned that the journey to Cobre consumed almost a day, and that the mine I was bound for, El Monte de Cobre, was in the mountains beyond. The train got under way only an hour late. Immediately, great excitement prevailed. I had just settled back to enjoy life, when the door at the far

end of our car burst open and three men strode in. Each wore a huge sombrero, at least two feet wide, a bright striped shirt under an open vest, and, slung around his waist, crossed cartridge-belts and two of the largest guns I have ever seen carried as "small arms." The men wore no masks, but I was sure we were in for a hold-up, and I rather looked forward to the novelty of it. The crowd in the front end of the car stood up, and a terrific argument began. I ducked my head in the most approved manner; after all, I had n't been going to Wild-West cinemas for nothing. But the little hotel clerk at my side only laughed and drawled at me, "Immigration officers; it's all right!"

I was horribly disappointed, but that really was all they were. He told me the officials always waited for the train to be on its way, because then they never had to bar any one, but could argue matters out for the rest of the run and pick up what little persuasion might come their way. I learned that about half the passengers on that train were officials, anyway. The Mexicans have a passion for holding office. Every official has at least four subordinates, the object of the game being to see who can carry the most armament. At this, Mexicans are remarkably proficient.

When the worst of the excitement was over, I got up and wandered through the train. We were at

the rear of a long string of empty "concentrate" cars going back to the mill, to be loaded. There were two passenger-coaches—our own luxurious General-Grant-period day-coach, first class, and a box-car with wooden benches across it, that did duty for second class. This latter was crowded to capacity with heavily swathed individuals. It must have been nearly ninety degrees in that car, and most of the children (of whom there were plenty) were naked, but the women kept their black cotton shawls over their heads and around their necks, and the men were huddled under their blanket-like serapes. These passengers were mostly of the peon class, I supposed, although why there should be such a migration I could not surmise. In the first-class car there were a party of American hunters,—“after mountain lion,” my companion told me,—an American miner returning to camp after a holiday and showing the effects of New Year’s eve, and a handful of better-class Mexicans, very much “up stage” about the interference of the officials and the wanderings of the second-class passengers.

The first half of the journey was across a continuation of the desert, through the middle of which runs the international line. Great, flat, dusty, and deserted. The train rattled and clanked along an endless straight track at twenty miles an hour, and one by one the passengers and the train crew fell

asleep. It was a delightfully care-free ride: no pompous American brakeman to tell me to take my feet down from the seat in front of me; no lurching forward to a suffocating smoking-car to have a cigarette. I smoked when I pleased, and every one seemed to expectorate as the spirit moved.

About noon we drew into a ranching village of thatched houses on adobe foundations, with an imposing jail and four *cantinas*—Mexican for saloons. We rushed out for a bottle of cold beer, famous “*cerveza helada*,” and came back to wait in the train an hour or more while the engineer took his noonday nap. A host of small girls had boarded the train with little baskets of food. I met the renowned hot tamale in its native haunts, wrapped in greasy corn-husks, and discovered little pies of blackish dough folded over a center of some sort of cactus candy. If there were no cactus, I think Mexico would go out of business, for all the candy and nine tenths of the alcoholic beverages of the country are made from this obliging plant.

As we finally pulled out of the oasis, the examples around me became too much to bear and I too fell asleep. When I awoke, it took me a minute to realize I was still on the same train; for the desert was no longer about us and we were squirming up a tortuous, steep-sided valley, surrounded by the pleasantest of green trees. The train had plunged

into fairyland, winding in and out through deep cañons, following a tiny trickling stream. It was cool, and the engineer was breaking all world's records at thirty miles an hour and threatening to break our necks as well. I was enchanted; we seemed a million miles away from desolate Arizona. All afternoon every turn brought a new vista, and at last, —across a high ridge and around a bend—suddenly I saw our goal spread out below us: Cobre de Jesus, lying in the bottom of a cup-like valley which brought suddenly into my mind old conceptions of the valley of the Doones, so steep were the mountains which hemmed it in.

As we wound down, the little Texan, who had also awakened, began to tell me more of the town. It was built around the great concentrator that handles the copper ore from the mine, and boasted a colony of perhaps fifty Americans, a company hotel, and a monument.

This monument, he told me, was the reason for the "Jesus" in the name of the town. Its story is remarkable. The mine uses enormous quantities of explosives, which come from the States in special trains. Jesus was the name of the engineer of one of these trains. On November 7, 1908, the regular monthly shipment came in as usual and was transferred to the mine railroad, two cars of it being left in the yards, awaiting a clear track up the hill.

The regular crew was in the locomotive cab, waiting for orders, in another part of the yard. The day was a scorching-hot one, and the sun's rays beat down unmercifully. No one knows whether it was due to the heat of the sun or to a stray spark from the engine, but at about two o'clock in the afternoon the town was startled by the sudden blast of a locomotive whistle and the screech of the fire siren: the two cars loaded with high explosive were afire! Jesus, in his locomotive, had seen the fire and signaled. He saw, too, that within a few minutes the fire would reach the nitroglycerine, and a second later there would be no Cobre, no mill, no people—only a tangled mass of wrecked structures, a great hole in the ground where the train had been, and the silence that follows terrible disasters.

He gave one order: "Every one out of the cab!" The men flew. Then, knowing exactly what he was doing, he backed across the yard and with his own hands coupled his engine to the burning cars. Then he climbed calmly back into the cab, opened the throttle, and pulled that train, afire, out of the yards, half a mile up the track, and was still going when the explosion came! The concussion broke every window in town and killed twelve men besides himself. It blinded his own sister. But it saved about five thousand men, women, and children, and left his name a synonym for unparalleled bravery.

The town erected the monument, which stands in the center of the patio and is one of the first things to be seen by any one walking up from the station. The anniversary of the man's death is a big holiday; on that day there are wreaths on the stone; many speeches are made, and there is much weeping on all sides. Every one remembers the heroic engineer. His picture hangs in the company guest-house—a full-length portrait of him in overalls. He looks the type of man who would do as he did: a lean brown face, with resolution in its square chin and a reckless daring in the keen black eyes.

While I was still enthralled by the story of heroism, the train uttered a prolonged shriek of delight and drew up at its destination. A hundred dirty little hands reached for my bags. I struggled through the rabble and out into the evening cool of the mountains. There was a long plaza before me, lined with trees; a splashing fountain; the monument; and a rambling white building along one side of the open space—the company hotel. The scene was an odd mixture of beauty and ugliness, the natural picturesqueness of the Latins contending with the gaunt, ugly iron and steel of the industry that had made the town. And all about, as I walked across to the hostelry, were soft voices and laughter. Girls strolled by in couples, arm in arm, one shawl thrown across the shoulders of both. They glanced at each



THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION AROUND THE MONUMENT TO THE TOWN'S HERO, JESUS, THE LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER

The patio of the mill town of Cobre with the company hotel at the left

passer-by out of the corners of their dark eyes, with the half-inviting, enigmatical look of the young Spanish women.

An ore-train rushed by on a hidden track around the mountain above, the long white beam of its headlight, like an accusing finger from heaven, sweeping the slope. There was the sound of stringed instruments in the air, and a soft rustle of wind in the trees. It was dream-like and refreshing; here at last was a life quite remote from the hustle and bustle of American cities. I drank deep of it in those few feet across the plaza.

From this exoticism I stepped into the business-like interior of the American hotel. The lobby was a bare white room with a counter on one side, and a stairway, and looked as deserted as an impressionistic stage-setting when the play is over and the cast gone. But after I had had my dinner,—an American meal of the lunch-counter variety, served in a barren hall at one end of the building,—I returned to find the characters beginning to appear.

One by one, a dozen men drifted in and lined up at the counter. At first glance they were romantic-looking individuals, rough types in the conventional dress of the place—worn leather puttees, old army breeches, and colored shirts. They proved to be rather a silent crew, who seemed to know one another's thoughts before they were spoken, from hav-

ing lived so long together. When twenty or more were gathered in the bare hall, I learned the reason for their coming. My friend the Texan began drawling names, from behind the counter, and passing out mail from a pile he had before him. One could see at once that it was a rite. The men who got mail every day received theirs silently, and the ones who never got any mail but always came, hoping against hope, made their usual jokes: "Ain't that check from my rich uncle in yet?" with a laugh; "Here! you got more 'n your share!" I sighed, and wondered if I should get as homesick for news as they appeared to be.

But the jazz-fiends arrived to break up my melancholy musing. Two young American school-teachers with bobbed hair and sport skirts, faintly echoing flapperism, appeared with an escort of half a dozen youths quite unlike the old-timers of the mail hour, in dapper collegiate clothes and slicked hair. They trooped upstairs, where, following, I found a lounge furnished with wicker sofas and chintz curtains. In the corner stood a big phonograph, and a second later I was greeted with the rhythm of the latest Broadway jazz music. A great civilizing agent, the modern dance; and Cobre takes it very seriously. The first question a new arrival is asked, if he is under forty, is, "Can you do the Chicago?"

The brass vigor of the music, the exciting pulse

of the dance after the soft atmosphere of the plaza, struck me. Two races were represented here, each worshiping its own idols, in temples facing each other across a broad street. But I had one more god from the North to meet.

There was an audience of grizzled men, standing apart in one corner, to whom dancing was evidently a sport to watch, not to indulge in. Joining them, I was at once accepted as an onlooker, and conversation sprang up. The eldest and most ferocious eyed me narrowly and cautiously asked, "Do you play golf?" I made the mistake of admitting that I did, and that I had my clubs with me. Inside of a minute I was forced back into my room; my sticks were unwrapped from the burlap they had been packed in, and human life and electric-light bulbs were in immediate danger; for it turned out that there was a six-hole course laid around the valley. There were desert fairways and the oiled sand greens of the Southwestern courses, but an intensity of enthusiasm prevailed in comparison with which the spirit of St. Andrews was that of the disinterested spectator.

Luckily, I kept quiet the rest of the evening, for after we returned to the lounge the discussion gathered momentum. It settled down to serious conversational golf. Gone was all the listlessness of converse among intimates. There was a fire, a

fury now, born of righteousness of principle: the man who "ran up his approaches" and the man who "dropped them on" were on the verge of violence. The "long driver" was patronizing to the man who believed in a "straight game." On and on it went, unceasing. I listened, amazed, until at last I remembered that I must be up by six in the morning to be on my way, and, unobserved, slunk to bed in my big whitewashed cell. And as I fell asleep I thought to myself what a ghastly place this world must be for a man who wanted to get away from "the greatest game of them all"!

I was awakened in the chill blackness of early morning by the long-drawn-out scream of the six-o'clock siren, a horrible form of torture I was to know better as time went on. I was to take the seven-o'clock train "up the hill" on the mine railroad. I found it at last, a little narrow-gage affair, made up of ore-cars with a miniature coach at the end, half passenger, half baggage. I was about to climb in at what I thought was the civilized end, when an American foreman spotted me and shouted, "First-class this way, buddy!" and pointed to the baggage half. The legitimate seats had long since been surrendered to the crowding natives, and the aristocracy grouped itself on the milk-cans forward.

The ride up was a trip on a scenic railway. The diminutive train panted up a thousand feet in some-

thing like five miles, and as the sun rose it opened out limitless vistas of jumbled mountains. Two hand-cars full of laborers "hitched on" at the end of the train, as small boys in the city used to hitch to beer-trucks. I had my first glimpse of Mexicans in the early morning, and realized why most Americans consider them a race of desperados, for before the sun is up the Mexican deems it unsanitary to leave the lower part of his face uncovered. The men huddled on the rocking hand-car had their blankets wrapped about them, drawn up across their faces and over their noses, their hats pulled down until only beady eyes were visible. The trainmen, too, had bandanas tied about their mouths, as if ready for a masquerade. And all were hunched up, sinister-looking, shivering in the light chill which seemed to go through them like a knife.

We climbed so steadily that when the train finally came to a stop and threw me and my milk-can seat across the car, I thought there could n't be much more of the world above us. We had reached the top of the world, all right, but there was still the ascent to heaven to be made. The track we had come up wandered across a little yard and, mortified at being able to go no farther, dived into the black mouth of a tunnel which opened into the mountain on the other side of the clearing. We were about half-way up the side of a great peak which loomed

straight up above us. On its side three thin ribbons of steel shot up, ending at the top in a black button. I followed the crowd to the base of these lines. The tracks, for such they turned out to be, ran down into the ground, and by the time I had gotten near, a little wooden platform before them was crowded with pushing and shoving Mexicans.

"Hop on!" said the foreman, who had accompanied me.

"On what?" I replied. But the answer was demonstrated to me, for the wooden platform gave a lurch and began to climb up the side of the hill, all by itself. A bag in each hand, overcoat flying in the wind, I leaped aboard, with nothing but a toe-hold and a sense of balance to keep me there. The platform was at the end of a cable and was being slowly but surely pulled up. It was my introduction to the "incline," the ascent of which is a vertical six hundred feet. The car goes up a forty-five-degree slope. Above fifty feet the cable teetered; that is, it got swinging and pulled the platform by long lurches and sudden stops. The passengers went rocking back and forth like strap-hangers in the subway. Only, here were no pleasant walls to bound against, and, in most places, to lose in the battle that developed meant a fall of twenty or thirty feet to the mountain-side. Those on the inside, being perfectly safe, immediately began to expand and

take more room; while those on the outside, clinging to the very edge of nothing, fought desperately to hold the few inches they had. I had always understood that the route to heaven was precarious, but I had never thought I should get as many thrills out of it as I got out of that ride.

As we approached the top, a swarm of little Mexican boys surged in behind us and made a descent down the hill which would have turned a New York urchin, coasting on one roller-skate, green with envy. Each boy had the remains of an old tin can, flattened out into a seat. This he placed on a rail and, sitting on it, balanced, his feet crossed in front of him on the rail to act as a brake, he cast off. Within a second he shot away down the incline like a paper dart thrown from a balcony. Down the whole terrific drop he sped like a bolt of lightning. This sort of coasting puts tame sports like skiing and toboggan-sliding in the class of pastimes recommended for invalids.

I was told a story of the spectacular escape of one of the bosses during the revolution. The mine was taken, and he was the last man to leave before the invaders arrived. All transportation had long since been stopped; he was left stranded, high and dry. When he saw at last that there was no chance of holding out, he tore the iron door off his cellar, and he and his wife carried it over to the

top of the incline. The story goes that he was pursued and fired at. The detail adds spice, anyway. But what is certain is that he put his iron door on the tracks, loaded his wife and two children and all their baggage aboard, and went down the hill at about sixty miles an hour. The marvel is that they weren't all killed, but they found a hand-car at the bottom on which to get to Cobre, and made good their escape.

At the top of this engine of iniquity I felt sure I had reached my goal, but no. We were in heaven, surely,—the train we had come up on was no more than a pencil mark below,—but we were on the wrong side of this promised land. A little electric motor and a flat-car had still to do their work and pull us through the peak of the mountain to the town on the other slope. And so, seated once more in the midst of my luggage, still dazed by my trip up, I made my first entrance into the mine through a screeching, winding passage, with familiar noises of air-drills about, and the sound of blasting coming occasionally through the rock. The great mountain I had come up enclosed the mine, and the operations were going on within, from the surface down to eighteen hundred feet below.

Well, here I was, on the battle-field at last! New worlds to conquer; a new race to study; an adven-

ture as real as that of Sir Lancelot riding after the Grail. And then, filled with these highfalutin dreams, I put down my bags and reported at the superintendent's office.

CHAPTER II

PHYSICAL IMPRESSIONS OF EL MONTE

REALITIES were not yet to rouse me from my ecstatic state, however. I had arrived at the busiest period of the day, and the entire official force was underground. So the superintendent's secretary philosophically told me to "take five," which is miner's slang for stealing a rest, and look the place over. When given advice of this kind I rarely bandy words. I thanked him and went abroad to see what was to be seen.

I had come out upon El Monte from the dark of the tunnel, abruptly, and my first impression of it was of a perfectly good city which some giant hand had taken and carelessly folded up into a drinking-cup. The tunnel came out on the inside of the cup, nearly at the top, and the whole town lay below, stuck to the sides. Whoever made it was a little too enthusiastic, or was n't quite sure how to go about it, for he forgot to put a bottom in it. The sides, a crumpled mass of them, came together three hundred feet below the edges, in the sharpest of V's. There was no valley, only a little hewn-out circle, at

the bottom of which was the plaza, a tiny green oasis in a desert of black housetops.

I wondered why such a spot was chosen for a town site, but miners go to the rock that pays, and the mountain does not come to Mohammed. After one look at the background of the picture, I was struck by the thought, "The town might just as well be here, for, obviously, in all the world there is no level spot!" As far as I could see, for miles upon miles, until the horizon lost its identity and melted away into the distance, were nothing but sharp-pointed peaks. A veritable storage-house of mountains; a parking-place for them, six thousand feet up, on top of the world. All the mountains that would fit nowhere else,—great towering snow-capped monsters; grotesque misshapen contortions; little pug-nosed affairs,—every conceivable variety that no one wanted, Fate or Geologic Force had jumbled together and piled up on the shelf there, to wait until they were needed in the world below.

El Monte de Cobre seemed to be high above the peaks, for as one looked away they spread out below, a prospect awe-inspiring in its immensity. Sometimes in the early morning I have seen the clouds settle below the camp and fill the valleys as the flood must have filled them under the ark; I have looked out, as Noah must have looked out, to find the world gone, hidden from view, and nothing

about but a great white sea with cloudless heavens above.

After one of Monte's rare snow-storms has happened in from the north and passed, I have traced its wanderings many miles across the face of the earth, by the broad white trail it left on the mountain-tops. It used to give me a queer feeling to see the working out of nature's caprices below me: as though I were looking down from heaven, or as if the world were a stupendous ship, with me in the crow's nest. But the town itself was as unusual as the view.

Partly niched in and partly built out on an artificial cliff, clinging to the steep side of the mountain, was the plateau on which I had come out. At one end arose the great black head-frame over the main shaft of the mine, three enormous whirling wheels on top showing where the cages—the elevators of the mine, hanging from the steel threads that passed over the wheels—hurtled up and down through the center of the earth. About this sinister gallows-frame were grouped the galvanized iron sheds which housed the compressed-air plants, the shops, and that guardian of lives below, the hoist engine. Opposite these lay a long white one-story building. One end of it housed the mine offices, before which half a hundred Mexicans were lounging, and the other the company store. Beyond, the

plateau wandered off, around the mountain, an aimless contour line lost among *cantinas* and greasy shops.

This level seemed, as I inspected it more carefully, a dividing line. The Mexican town swarmed up to it and covered it; but above, the odd hundred feet before the topography came to a sharp point at the top, was reserved for the American quarter. A path which degenerated into a stairway led on up through two lines of white houses with gardens fenced off from the roving burros. So steep was the slope that the floor of one house was on a level with the roof of its neighbor down the hill. The hillside had an odd terraced effect.

At one time there had been perhaps half a dozen peaks to cap all this, but the mining excavations below had dropped them, one by one, into the ground. All across the top of the camp there were vast excavations, "glory holes," where whole mountains had been blasted into bits and run down through the mine to fill the cavities from which the copper had been taken. I walked up the hill to examine one, and found, literally hanging over the edge of it, an excellent tennis-court. But just outside the base line, on the side nearest the hole, ran a long, deep crevice. Little by little, as the ground was being pulled from under it, the tennis-court was falling into the mine. I learned later that plans had been made for a new

court; but when I left Monte, the old one was still being played on as it slipped, inch by inch, like a glacier, down the side of the hill.

Along the edge of one of the first glory holes to be drawn down into the mine, I was told, there was a railroad, and one day a steam locomotive was passing along the track, when the ground under it opened. The engineer jumped, but the locomotive, being more adventuresome, toppled in, head first, and went down, little by little, over a hundred feet into the mine. It is still down there, in an old deserted cave, a little too much the worse for wear to be rescued, but looking very proud of its feat.

The American quarter seemed deserted, and as the day was still young, I strolled down the hill. A zigzag trail, half steps, ran from the mine offices to the plaza below. The peaceful quiet of the colony gave way to the swarming life of the Mexican town. At my first step I was almost run down by a cowboy, on horseback, plunging at a gallop up the steep hill. He was the genuine article, too, with huge leather chaps and enormous silver spurs. He lounged, half sideways, in a great rocking-chair of a saddle. Yes, and there were his six-shooters and his lariat, and his hat at a rakish angle. Making way for him and dodging his horse's flying hoofs were a swarm of pedestrians.

There were all kinds of folk here: children, half-

naked, shouting and playing; old women in the inevitable black hood; young girls, school-teachers from the cities of Mexico, modernized and proud of their imported (from Arizona) finery; workmen in the picturesquely careless dress of miners the world over, hurrying, at a slow walk, to their work; a sot still carrying on from the night before, seated in the middle of the path, roaring at the top of his lungs, soon to fall asleep across the highroad. For the rest of the day, or at least until the fumes of alcohol passed and he could stagger home, traffic would pick its way around or walk over his prostrate body.

On one corner stood a group of street merchants: venders of native cigarettes (twenty for two and a half cents) and candy—no, not simple candy but confections! There were tables of chocolate soldiers and candy statuary: men on rearing horses a foot high, marvelously put together, and sweets of every color of the rainbow. The bright hues were softened by an inch or so of encrusting dust, but they still had a strong appeal for the Mexicans. Beyond were the roulettes—big iron arrows, two or three feet long, clumsily mounted on a pivot, which one spun for “*diez centavos*” to determine whether or not one was to be the proud recipient of a two-penny knick-knack. The proprietors of these contrivances sat sleepily behind them, nodding to each passer-by, be he peon or foreman: “*Buenas días, señor,*” and, if

he was a customer, "*Como le va?*"—the beginning of a long formula of greeting.

Directly above the native shops stood the company store, extending a credit the former could not compete with, and though a peso (about fifty cents in gold) is often an exceedingly satisfactory profit to make in a day, they appeared to exist in great number, their proprietors happy and contented to sit all day in the sun. Near the stands, squatting tailor fashion on the ground, was a group watching two old men playing at a game something like checkers. A piece of cardboard, lined in pencil, with pebbles, black and white, for men; and the ferocious intensity and seriousness of an international chess match.

The streets were really clean, and I marveled until I met the town scavenger. It would have been foolish to waste the good money and the carefully conserved energy of man on a non-essential, so the entire work of street-cleaning was entrusted to that all-important animal the burro. Over the line he is known as the "Arizona canary" because of the ghastly sounds of agony he emits as a sign of friendship; and in every town there is an official burro-catcher, functioning as the dog-catcher does in other parts of the country, and a burro pound for the safe-keeping of stray burros. But here the little animal

is left to his own devices, which fit singularly well into the scheme of things, as he is an excellent scavenger. As an animal he is the most mangy, abused, moth-eaten, woebegone creature imaginable, and still the toughest. He has entire charge of the transportation system, and with a pack on his back carries everything, from coal to ice. He is driven with profanity, physical violence, and exhortation, all of which he meets with stoicism, if not disdain.

I once had the pleasure of seeing a burro and a land-slide meet. In front of the office lay one of the largest of the glory holes, now filled with broken rock. A stray burro had nosed down into it, looking for some chance cigarette butt or an old piece of paper of which he could make a nice light luncheon, when suddenly the cliff above shook off a few dozen tons of rock. The boulders came down with the noise of thunder and jarred the whole side of the hill. I was watching from the office, and as a cloud of dust went whirling up I shook my head. No more worry for one poor burro! The cloud hung a minute and then settled, and there in the midst of the fallen rock stood the little animal. There was a look of annoyance on his face, and he twitched one ear as if irritated. Then he nodded his head and climbed out of the hole. How it chanced that no rock had touched him, I cannot tell, but I am quite sure he was

disturbed not by the danger but because the slide had covered up the choice morsel he had gone down after.

But on this particular morning the burros appeared to be quite safe, from nature at least. I stepped aside in my walk to let a long train of them pass, their leader having made it plain to me that *he* was n't going to make any concession. They had a sort of wooden frame set on their backs, over worn blankets; and each carried in his frame three hundred-pound bags of cement. There was a little mare near the end of the line and a tiny foal running along behind her. When the caravan halted half-way up, for a breathing-spell, the foal trotted in and helped itself to its breakfast.

As I wound down, I seemed to be sinking into a great sea of sound. An animal chorus rose to greet me. There was the crowing of innumerable cocks,—who, by the way, violated the ordinances of all well-regulated chanticleers and announced their bravery all through the night,—the braying of burros, an occasional neigh from a horse, and the squeals of numberless litters of pigs. Intermingled with this confusion of sound were the shouting of children and the crying of many babies, and above the whole rose the unceasing thunder of the shops. Day and night, by the head-frame of the mine, the shops roll out their anvil chorus, as the steel is hammered into

rigid sharpness so that it may take up again its battle with the rock; for sharp steel is the life-blood of a mine nowadays, when air-drills drive shafts into hard rock by inches to the minute.

Over all the swarming life of the valley this ceaseless roar spreads a blanket of sound, while above stands the enormous black sentinel that is the head-frame, a symbol to all, a warden of lives below the surface.

At last in my wanderings I reached the heart of the town, the plaza. It was a tiny circle, made of concrete to withstand the floods from the hills, surrounded with waving green trees and wooden benches. In the center stood the band stand with its red, green, and white flag waving above. Then, in the middle of the day, it was almost deserted, but at one side was a concrete hand-ball court, a relic of the penetration of American recreation policies into the South. This seemed the center of attention for the minute, and being by nature inquisitive, I stopped to see what it was all about.

A group of ragged urchins were playing at bull-fighting. The bull, the smallest and most helpless of the lot, was enveloped in the remains of an old khaki blanket and had a long stick in each hand which he held to his head for horns when making an attack. There were four fighters, and the etiquette of the bull-ring seemed to be strictly observed. The pica-

dor was a-horseback, mounted on a fiery broom, and armed with another with which he tortured the animal. After each assault he galloped to one side and drew off his hat, a ragged little cap, with a pretentious sweep and a flourish, acknowledging the cheers of the populace. Two others were the banderilleros—the men who infuriate the bull by sticking darts into his back. They were untiring in their efforts. The last fighter was the matador, standing correctly aloof as his dignity demanded, a long wooden sword ready for the fatal blow.

The bull charged hither and thither, with tremendous ferocity, now inflicting a ghastly wound on the poor horse, now dashing into the disheveled shirt that was the red scarf of the banderillero and letting out horrible groans of tortured defeat when he missed his tormentor. The crowd of idlers applauded and exhorted at every turn, until finally the bravest of matadors stepped forward, bowed, and drew his sword. The bull halted and pawed the ground with rage. He shook his head from side to side in anguish, one horn straight in the air, the other pointing menacingly at the enemy. There was a moment of tension; then, with a great gesture, the killer launched forward and sank his sword to the hilt, under the bull's arm. The moans of the dying animal were terrible to hear as he sank to the cold



THE GATES TO AVERNUS

The guardian of lives below: the hoisting machinery over the shaft; the shops and a jagged glory hole (l to r)



“DOWN THE HILL”

In the Mexican town where a doorstep is the roof next door

concrete. When I left, the former matador was just receiving the horns, for his turn at being bull.

I climbed back up one of the side streets of the town. The rows of stepped-up houses ran up on each side, each house with a little wooden balcony before it. Every balcony had its own tangled garden in rusty tin cans, its assortment of half-washed clothes drying in the sun, and a disorder and color that defied the geometrical lines of the company-built houses. I could not see the interiors, but there was a constant traffic, going in and coming out, of toddling babies and odd-colored pigs. At my approach the street had been full of the latter, but, terrified at the sight of me, they set up a prodigious squealing, and each and every one sought cover. And cover meant the house of their master. They dashed in, greeted with curses from the interior, and came cautiously back to stick an inquisitive snout around the corner of the doorway to look me over. The children, dirty babies dressed in minute fractions of shirts, were frankly curious until I came too near.

The street itself was no more than a washed-out gully. When there is a rain, in this country, it carries half the mountain-side down with it. Midway up the slope, in each street, stood a concrete watering-trough around which a dozen women were

struggling to wash a few handfuls of clothes or to fill their battered pails. In the midst of the desolate mountain wilderness, in spite of squalor and poverty, the scene had a quaint picturesqueness worthy of Naples.

As I reached the end of my ascent back to the office, I was witness to one of those disturbances which are so upsetting to an American in the Latin countries, a wayside exhibition of cruelty. I was panting my peaceful way up the hill when suddenly a child, three or four years old, dashed out of one of the houses and ran, screaming, across my path. Literally on its heels came a little old woman in a filthy blouse and petticoat, holding a piece of rope in one hand. In the middle of the way, not ten feet from me, the child stumbled and fell on its face, howling. The old hag pounced upon it like a down-swooping vulture and seized it by the nape of the neck as one would catch a wayward kitten to bring it back to its mother.

But the treatment was anything but suitable for a kitten, for the woman, in the blindest rage I have ever witnessed, brought the rope down on the defenseless body. I was so horrified I could not move. Three times she wrapped the lash around the child, the cord cutting in with a vicious snap. Then, shrieking with anger, she threw the baby from her, kicked it twice, and walked back into the house. I

ran forward, awake at last, to pick the beaten thing up, but it was still alive enough to distrust me, and, moaning and shaking with sobs, scrambled away and crawled under the porch of one of the houses opposite.

I stood unnerved. At the well the women were still washing and elbowing one another out of the way to get at the water. Other children were playing about as if nothing in the world had happened. A sound of singing issued from the house whence the woman had come. It was all in a day. I shook my head and walked on.

At the top of the hill I was treated to a second exhibition of cruelty, and here, at least, had a chance to work off my feelings. The head of a burro train—an old, broken-down creature, heavily laden with fagots—had fallen under his load and would not move. So the driver had come up from the rear and, instead of helping the burro up by lightening its load, stood by and beat it with a stick. The animal made attempts to rise, but failed. So the man threw aside his stick and resorted to more drastic measures. He leaped in front of the beast and kicked it in the face. I came up in the midst of this performance and went for the driver, my remonstrances interspersed with selections from my mine vocabulary. For one who did not know a word of my language, he understood me remarkably well. He

snarled for a minute, and then took off his hat and bowed. The rope securing the wood was caught in a slip-knot on top of the pile, and this I jerked loose. We came the nearest to real action when he saw the wood rolling on all sides down the hill. But the animal got to its feet at once and stood still, ready to be loaded again, so I judged the man's punishment sufficient. The long-drawn-out whine of the siren began to rise above the roar of the shops, to tell the community it was eleven-thirty, so with a parting salutation to my friend I continued on my way.

CHAPTER III

MY JOB AND THE FIRST DAY

WHEN I finally did succeed in seeing the superintendent, I found him a small man with watchful eyes and a habit of frowning. Like most of the men in authority in Mexico, he was remarkably young for his position—I should say in the thirties. He asked me to have a seat, and offered me a cigarette. I admit that, as an ex-day laborer, I was n't used to such treatment, and I was almost overcome.

He began by explaining to me a little about the organization of the mine. For a big industry it was extremely simple. On the other side of the line, whence I had come, an order had to pass through several assistants—general foremen, division foremen, day and night foremen, shift bosses, and so on—to get from the superintendent to the workman; a never-ending process, in which all personal touch was lost, and usually the spirit of the order as well. In Mexico the authority was much more directly relegated, and was backed by racial superiority. The mine, the superintendent told me, was divided into

sections, three or four levels underground to a section. Over each division was an American foreman and an engineer. Above them was only one general foreman, and then the superintendents. I was to be one of the engineers.

This settled, he began to explain to me a few of the problems I should be up against. My job was that of a combination engineer and paymaster; that is, on the engineering measurements I was to make out the pay-sheets. On just settlements, he told me, rested the entire morale of the mine. In Monte, where there were no traditions, there was much active thought and a real contact between the "man higher up" and the laborer, and since the only responsibility was to guarantee the profits, three thousand miles away in New York, nearly every known method of adjustment had been tried out.

In a mine there is a choice of three methods of paying the men. First, a man may be paid a definite amount each day, and put under supervision to make sure that he earns it. With Americans, where there is a certainty of something resembling a conscience, and especially when the labor is such that what is a good day's work can be exactly determined, this method is a fair one. Men will strike a level, after a time, where their output is fairly uniform. But with such an organization as that at Monte it is hard to

speed up production, and I am looking at the matter from the operative's point of view, which is the view one acquires first in a foreign country. It may become necessary to offer special inducements to men in order to get them to work harder; to set a standard of work and pay a bonus for what a man has done above that standard. The bonus system is the one most commonly in use in Arizona. The third system is work by contract, similar to the piece-work system in a factory: payment only for what a man actually does.

They are all perfectly good economic plans, and very pretty on paper. But a mine presents special problems which affect the choice. The surface plant, to begin with, costs so much to operate, and the overhead expenses, salaries, interest on the investment, and so on are so great, that the utmost speed in production is essential. A mine has a definite life: there is only so much raw material, and when that is gone, all the machinery, the shops, and the plant are very nearly worthless.

Moreover, there are physical problems: the work underground is spread out over vast areas. There were, at Monte, over a hundred miles of openings below the surface, and the work was carried on from one end to the other. It would have taken hundreds of men to watch every working place, and it

was necessary to adopt a system which would put men on their own responsibility. The necessity involved, at once, a study of the individual.

The Mexican, the superintendent told me, is a peculiar animal. On "day's-pay" he will stall until one is wild with exasperation. He is not essentially a mercenary person, and if guaranteed his daily wage and offered a bonus for additional labor, he will think it over pretty carefully and decide that, after all, life is short and work a prodigious nuisance, and why should he break his back for a few extra pennies? But given a contract, and the assurance that he will get so much money for every ton he mines, and that it does n't matter how long he takes doing it, or how often he sits down to contemplate life, he will work with a vigor which is remarkable.

All this is very nearly quoted. The superintendent went on to say that the company used to pay by the number of cars of ore run out from each working place each day. The plan seemed to work well, until the company began to check up the tonnage so reported with the tons received at the mill and weighed there. There was only a twenty-five percent difference! For every four tons the mill handled, word came up from underground that five had been mined. The Mexican counts very badly when a slight error will give him a few extra dollars.

I am getting ahead of myself, but I remember that once I had a stope which was still being paid by the car. And every week I went down to the *ryador* (the gentleman whose job it was to count the cars going out) and copied the daily report of a stope still being paid on the old plan. Well, one day I was in a hurry and I copied five days' work instead of six. I got a total of, say, one hundred cars and paid the *contratista* (contractor) accordingly. The next day the *contratista* came up to the office in a great rage and declared that he had been cheated. He said he had one hundred *and five* cars to his credit, and he produced his own record of the cars mined every day. As was my custom, I said I was very sorry and would look into the matter. It did seem odd, as he had gotten out about a hundred and fifty cars the week before. So I put on my "digging clothes" and went down into the mine again to see the *ryador*. I told him how much I had paid, and asked him if that was right.

"Of course not; the señor has made a mistake; the *contratista* in question has one hundred *and thirty-five* cars! You forgot Saturday, when he rolled thirty cars before my very eyes!"

Well, here was a discrepancy! The man himself said one hundred and five, the checker one hundred and thirty-five. It remained a problem until I compared the daily lists and found the checker's average

just five cars a day over the contractor's. What had happened was that they had come to an understanding that the *ryador* was to pass him five cars a day extra—just for good luck (and a dollar a car profit). But with my mistake I had cut off not only his additional graft but some of the work he had actually done. And the contractor had given himself away, in his indignation, by telling me the number he had really trammed. If he could n't get his rake-off, at least he wanted to be paid for what he *had* done.

But, to get back to the lecture I was receiving: I was told that to avoid just such occurrences as this the company had decided to add to their staff an engineering department—to send Americans down into the mine actually to measure the work done. My job was to go down once a week to every working place on what was to be my “run,” and measure the rock broken and trammed, and on the basis of my measure to see justice done.

“In the first place,” my superintendent went on, “you ’ve got to be a diplomat. The success of the system, the whole morale of the mine depends on the way you handle the men. They don’t understand everything that goes on, but they are pretty canny about estimating their own work. Absolute justice first; and if you must temper it, temper it with more money.”

And with that he closed the interview and took me

in and introduced me to the chief engineer. The division engineers, one of whom I was to be, were just coming up from their morning's work. They came stamping in, one by one, wearing big muddy boots, faded trousers smeared with dirt, a khaki coat flapping with note-books, and a "digging hat" cocked at a rakish angle. The majority were boys just out of college, and looked like characters from a novel by Richard Harding Davis. As they came in, each threw his lamp to the little Mexican helper trotting at his heels, who took it away to clean it. The magnificence of such luxury—a man to clean one's lamp—made a deep impression on me. I felt a great longing to become one of these swashbuckling characters and roam around the inside of the earth with a helper at my side and authority at my back.

There was a good deal of banter back and forth and much introducing, and I found myself attached as apprentice to a chap of Irish descent, Michael Leary, from Arizona University, who was to teach me the ropes. He gave me some new lights on the situation.

"Well," he said, "the thing's experimental still, but we're making progress. I've just come from climbing up a hundred feet of wet rope to find the thing with two strands out of three cut at the top. The chief's experimenting crossing an adding-

machine with a monkey, and hopes to get a first-class engineer as a result!"

I sat by his side all afternoon and watched him plot on maps the notes he had taken in the morning: "Pen-and-ink drawings in seven different colors showing the home life of a low-grade ore body." Each of the different colored inks represented a week's work, and the new color showed the advance. From the maps he computed the volumes of rock broken, in cubic meters, and then made out the pay-sheets. There is a law, he told me, that men must be paid every day. So the office advances every man in the mine three pesos a day credit at the store. That is deducted from the pay-roll we make out. The contract for each working place is given to one man, the *contratista*, and he gets his own *trabajadores* (laborers) to work for him. So our only dealings were with the *contratistas*. The contracts are worked out so that if an operation is well run, each man will receive an average wage of about five pesos a day, and as the contractors rarely pay their helpers, most of whom are peons, more than four pesos, they make a peso a day on each of their men.

We figured that one man on the pay-roll that afternoon would clean up twenty dollars a day in gold for himself—a tremendous amount. When he had computed the final figure, my instructor paused to scratch his head.

“Aw! I can ’t do that!”

“Why not?” I asked.

“Why, he ’ll lay off a week, and when he comes back he won’t do any work for another week, and then he ’ll come up here raising hell because he only makes five pesos when two weeks ago he made forty!”

“Well, what are you going to do about it?” (I was solicitous for the cause of justice.)

“Oh, I ’ll pass him about half of it and keep the rest on the books. In a week or two he ’ll run into hard luck, and I ’ll give it to him to help him out!”

That was my introduction to the fact that all Mexicans are children and have to be treated accordingly. The engineer has to be a sort of amateur god. If a man runs in luck on a contract, he is eventually paid the whole amount earned, but if there is trouble and he does not make his expenses, he is given them, anyway. Of course if it becomes his practice to fall short, one looks around for another *contratista*, but work underground is so hard to measure accurately, and the difficulty of it varies so rapidly, that the real basis of measurement is common sense and a desire to be just.

The next day I had my first real trip in the mine. I started off with a bad break. I dressed myself in the costume in which I had been mining in the States. Over each knee of the trousers there was

the telltale threadbare spot that had been worn by hours of fighting a "muck stick." I thought they would at least prove I was no greenhorn, but I stepped out in front of the Mexican helpers and found myself greeted with a great shout of derision. The comments I mercifully did not understand, but they were translated for me to the tune of "Where's your shovel?" "An American has come to show us how to muck!" and more. As a matter of fact, I got considerable standing among the men later by telling them I had been a *contratista* in the States, but this first day the evidences of menial work did not take too well. I'm afraid I was as self-conscious of the costume which told of an apprenticeship on the line as most men are of their uniforms now that the war is over.

I went down with my foreman, Donald Stewart, known on top as the "Fighting Scotchman," and underground, I learned later, as "the stork," because of the crouching walk that his height made necessary in the rounds below. Virtually all the bosses had nicknames among the miners. There were the "marmoset," the "parrot," the "mouse," and so on, each name suggested by an eccentricity.

Before I went below, Don took me in and showed me, on the "base map," where we were going. This map is a big sheet that looks like a drawing of lower Boston with the names of the streets omitted. With

his finger he pointed out our course and wound around a mile and a half in about six seconds. Then he said, "Come on." I have a clear impression that I remembered nothing.

We went underground, and he led the way down winding drifts, which are little five-by-seven-foot tunnels, up ladder-ways, in and out; then suddenly he remembered he had to get back "on top." So he said casually:

"You can wander around and look things over; you've got the whole morning."

I certainly needed it. I was in an old part of the mine, cut up in a thousand different directions by twisting, turning openings, half of them ending in blank walls. When I started to attempt an escape, I spent nearly an hour getting back to the place where he had left me. Every now and then I would come upon little signs,—"*Al tiro Nuevo*," or "*Al tiro Esperanza*,"—but as I still did n't know more than ten words of Spanish, it did n't dawn upon me that these were directions, "*Al tiro*" meaning "To the shaft." I had a little carbide cap-lamp that held only enough fuel for two hours. The farther I went, the less I knew where I was. And I kept thinking of some experiments I had assisted in at college, when we built cardboard mazes and let mice into them to see how long it would take the creatures to find their way out. The mice were much cleverer

at it than I was; they rarely took over ten minutes to escape. But they got so excited doing it, and seemed so utterly terrified, that my heart bled now at the memory of their torture. Some horrible god of retribution had sent me all this way to experience agony such as I had given them.

Being lost in a mine was a weird experience. My footsteps (they always seem to accelerate when one does not know where one is going) echoed with hard, hollow sounds as I strode over track ties or sank into an empty nothing when I struck long stretches of mud beneath my feet. My light seemed to grow smaller, and illuminated only the little circle in front of my feet. It was impossible to preserve a sense of direction; the drifts wound and turned; and as there was no perspective, I had no way of telling how much I had changed my direction. I went on faster and faster, stumbling over débris and striking my head on low spots in the "back," my doubling tracks leading nowhere.

At last I realized that I was above the level on which we had come in, and decided the best thing to do was to get down. The ladder-way had vanished, but I found an "ore pass," a hole down through the rock, opening at one side, with a rope secured above it. I began to wonder how long the rope was, because I remembered ridiculing what I considered the stupidest accident I'd seen in the United States. A



THE GLORIOUS VISTA SACRIFICED EACH DAY FOR THE ETERNAL DARKNESS ‘‘INSIDE’’

Polack had been working in a stope near me and in some way dropped his lamp down the chute into which he was throwing ore. He was in the dark, and helpless. But all he had to do was to sit still and wait until the boss came around. He did n't even know enough to take advantage of his opportunity to do nothing. He remembered that there was a rope hanging over the chute, and he got hold of it and began going down after his light. The chute was eighty feet deep. The end of the rope came after he had gone fifty. And there he was, suspended. He did n't have the strength to pull himself up, and he hung until he could hang no longer and then fell thirty feet and broke his best leg doing it. They found him at the bottom later. His leg did n't seem to bother him, but he sat there cursing that rope, from the depths of his soul. He had put his faith in it and it had basely betrayed him.

While I was still debating whether or not to risk a similar joke on myself, a workman came along. I asked him how to get to the shaft. I asked him very politely. He shrugged his shoulders and replied, "*¿No habla Español?*" We agreed on that, but it did n't answer my question, so I motioned him ahead and followed. He led me to the stope he was working in. The half-dozen men who were shoveling ore into wheelbarrows and wheeling it away, stopped with one accord, at my entry, and gathered around

me. I explained the situation very carefully—in English. They waited until I had finished and then began to debate among themselves what it was I had said. Finally they all shook their heads and lapsed into silence. I had never before been in a foreign country where I could n't speak the language, and my helplessness now was agonizing. It was a sort of cross between being dumb and having one's hands tied, or like a hideous dream in which one wants to say something and cannot.

I was on the verge of being completely discouraged when I hit upon the happy idea of an improvised marionette show. I took from my pocket a plumb-bob on a string, and hung it over one finger. Then with the other hand, using the fingers for legs, I gave an imitation of a man walking and climbing upon the plumb-bob. My audience watched, breathless, while I pulled the plumb-bob, with its cargo of one man, up a couple of feet to my knee. Then I walked my man out, or off, and pointed up to show where it was he had alighted. It worked like a charm; with one accord they howled out their appreciation: "*El tiro! el tiro!*" and burst into roars of laughter. When I was finally escorted out, I found the station not a hundred feet from the bottom of the ladder-way leading out of the stope!

The Mexican has an extraordinary ability to understand pantomime and to translate the most

atrocious attempts at Spanish. In France, use every French form correctly, and speak the language with grammatical excellence, and if you have not the exact inflection of the section of country you are in, your words will mean no more to the Frenchman than Sanskrit would to an Ohio farmer. Even observe, in our own United States, an immigrant trying to ask his way in a railroad station, and blundering only to the extent of putting an "e" on the end of every word. Not only will the American fail to understand him, but he is very likely to be pretty intolerant about it; the man who can't speak English and speak it well must be an idiot—and a scoundrel, too, or he'd have taken pains to learn! But in Mexico, where even the poorest peon speaks better Latin-American Spanish than ninety percent of Americans speak English, one meets with the most extraordinary tolerance.

The general foreman at Monte was a hard-headed Cornishman—one of the "Cousin Jacks," as the miners called them. He had lived in Mexico twenty years, but he spoke the most horrible Spanish I have ever heard, barring my own. He used nine tenths of his verbs in the infinitive only, and his pronunciation was excruciating. But he spoke as fast as the most excitable Spaniard, and the men never missed a trick.

Spanish is not a difficult language to acquire, as

languages go. The pronunciation is fairly easy to master, when one has learned that “e” has the sound of our “a,” and “i” the sound of our “e,” that “h” is silent, and a few other simple rules; for Spanish is pronounced exactly as it is spelled. The grammar of Latin-American Spanish is identical with that of Castile, and there are only minor differences in pronunciation. The lisping of the older form is distasteful to the Latin-American.

Near the border as we were, the natives had adopted a large number of English words which lent an odd touch to their speech—mining terms especially—*tracké*, *posté*, and so on, taken in for the addition of the “é.” I once saw an advertisement in which the word *quequi* appeared. It puzzled me so that I sought enlightenment of the Mexican with whom I was studying the language. He looked at me a minute and grinned.

“Say it,” he told me; “say it several times!”

I did, about a dozen times before the meaning dawned on me. The word was the good old English “cake” with the usual “é” on the end, and spelled in the Spanish manner.

But the problem of mastering the language was still ahead of me, and for a long time to come I was to rely on pantomime, the rote memory of half a dozen phrases, and the natural good nature of the men to get me through.

CHAPTER IV

I TAKE OVER DIVISION ONE

FOR two weeks I repeated the experiences of my first days. In the morning I would go underground and explore. I never got lost again, because I formed the habit of carefully mapping out my route before I essayed a trip to the lower world, but the strain of finding my way was always with me. I learned, too, the names of my contractors, and delighted in them. There were Jesus and Jesus Maria, and a number of marvelous rolling names—Roque Rios, Roberto Ramos, and such—and Fernand Fernandez. I made the rounds with my instructor, who was called “Don Miguel” underground, and I soon acquired the title of “Rafael.” We started work at seven, following the shift below, and remained underground until noon; the afternoons we spent computing, in the office. The details of the “system” were legion, and I found myself in a daze, trying to remember my way around the inside of the mine: which prices went with which stopes; and the division of these prices into allowances for “powder,” “breaking,” “mucking,”

“tramming,” and a thousand and one extras. And with all this went a horrible tongue-tied feeling as I groped my way into the language.

At last, one day, after I had been doing the actual work of the division, under supervision, for a week, I went down to the office and was informed that I was to take over Division I. “The thrill that comes once in a lifetime”! The chief handed me a Brunton compass and told me to go out to the “caddy house” and get a helper. The Brunton compass, a rough surveying instrument carried in a little leather case on one’s belt, was the symbol of office. (It was like being given your sword by King Arthur of Round Table fame, if you want to romance over business.) The “caddy house” was a little shack back of the office where the engineers’ helpers, *los ayudantes*, lounged, waiting for instructions.

In the early morning the scene here was one of tremendous activity. The “boys” (as they were called, although some were old men with families) were very busy rushing about filling the carbide lamps and collecting the impedimenta for the morning’s work. The engineers always came out at the last moment and were in great haste.

“*La cinta—dos plomos—no mas!*” (“The tape—two plumb-bobs—that’s all!”) Every one shouted

and swore and enjoyed himself generally. The "boys" jabbered, "Le' 's go! What t' 'ell!" and were sure to forget at least half of what they were told to bring.

I found a new man who was to be my inspiration, and asked him his name. "Salomon, señor," he replied very respectfully, because it was the first time he 'd seen me. He was rather a handsome chap of twenty-two or three, tall for a Mexican but still diminutive beside any Anglo-Saxon of more than average height. Dressed in an army sweater of khaki-colored wool, what was once a pair of breeches, and a sort of cocked-hat effect, he had, nevertheless, a cavalierish air about him. As for me, I had learned my lesson, and now sported an enormous pair of trench boots, bright-blue trousers that disappeared into the tops, with a pirate's bag at the knees, and an old campaign hat. Salomon was taken with the boots: he said he 'd never seen any as big as they were, and was all admiration. When I finally paraded over to the shaft, I felt like Robinson Crusoe with my man Friday at my heels.

My division took in the three top levels of the mine. A perverse fate had put my foreman, Don Stewart, and me, both of us considerably over six feet tall, on a "run" where the ground was so "heavy" that it had caved most of the drifts to a

height of about five feet. I developed a lope, bent double, with my arms hanging almost to the ground, which left no doubt of my ancestry.

I was n't quite sure what means to use to establish my authority over Salomon, but after some experimenting I found that treating my new acquisition as a human being worked out as well as any method. We became, in time, the best of friends. He took an intense personal interest in my Spanish, and would stop in the midst of anything he was doing, when I made too flagrant a mistake, and correct me with some dignity, repeating the correction until I got it right. From the first Salomon refused to believe I was an American. It happened that in an early conversation I put together a sentence in Spanish, intended to be facetious, to the effect that English was a harder language than Spanish, and that I had been studying it for years and had n't mastered it yet. Then, as I was n't sure that my statement had registered, I repeated it in French, hoping a language nearer his own might help. I did n't realize the impression I had made, until, much later, I overheard him explaining to a contractor that I was a Frenchman and very clever to be able to speak English as well as I did.

Working with Salomon constantly and carrying on as extensive conversations as I could for the sake of my Spanish, I learned a great deal from him

of the Mexican mind and how it works. The first thing that began to be apparent was the man's actual inability to worry. I had n't realized, until I worked with a Mexican, how great a part of the Anglo-Saxon's life is taken up with a regard for the future. The Anglo-Saxon seems to be a worrier: he has deeply at heart the success of every endeavor; the future is a pretty real thing, even to the lowest of the race. The Mexican, on the contrary, seems to be physically incapable of sustained worrying. It just is n't in him.

Salomon, at twenty-two, was the proud father of two babies. For a long time the younger had been the weakling of the family, and during one of our rare cold spells it fell ill. Salomon reported its condition to me day by day, imitating a racking cough the wretched little thing had contracted. The baby's illness continued for a week, and finally ended in tragedy. A snow-storm climaxed the cold spell; there was not enough wood to supply the community, and Salomon, with only his day's wage of a dollar and a half gold, had little to spare for comfort. The day after the snow-storm I was without a helper. But the second day he reappeared, a hideous specter of sorrow, his face drawn and his eyes still red. He said, very simply, that his baby had died. I was greatly touched and all that day could not give the boy an order. He was moody, silent,

and depressed, and finally I sent him on top and told him to go home to his wife.

I wondered, vaguely, how long this would continue, and was, myself, a little worried. I expected to hear, in the morning, of Salomon's suicide. But, instead, when I went out to the "caddy house" the next day, I found him laughing and joking with the other boys and so normal as to have forgotten to fill my lamp. Underground some careless reference of mine to the storm brought back his sorrow, and he turned from me and I knew he was crying. But the next moment his grief had passed and I heard of it no more. Two weeks later he was as drunk as ever, at the dance in town, and fighting with his wife as usual. He was really deeply and sincerely moved, but it wasn't in his nature to retain the emotion. After all, the incapacity was a saving grace, for the children died like flies at the least cold, or continued heat.

But that first day he worked with me, Salomon was in an excellent humor. Despite low wages, the position of *ayudante de ingeniero* is a pretty coveted position, for the *ayudantes* work only three or four hours a day and the rest of the shift they can sit around in the sun before the office and comment on the girls who pass by. And underground, with the authority to stop work that interfered with our measuring, and the opportunity to gossip with the

men in each working place, Salomon was immensely content.

We had a regular schedule of working places to measure each day, and Salomon took the measurements while I checked them, to be sure that no human element entered into the transaction (Salomon had many relatives underground who might benefit by his mistakes), and noted them down.

But first a little about the mine itself. The object of mining is to get out the ore which is in the earth, and to get it out with as little as possible of the waste rock that surrounds it. That is obvious. To do this a shaft is sunk from the surface to the ore. At Monte there are three shafts, and the ore—various combinations of copper and sulphur—is distributed over what is called a “mineralized area.” That is, if it were possible to walk through the rock, one would come on the ore, *el metal*, in bunches, like big raisins in a cake. These bunches lie around the side, and a few in the center, of what is a formation shaped very like a pear. The skin of the pear, and in some places the core, is the valuable part. It stands upright in the ground, nearly a mile long and half as wide, and the shafts go down, one on each end and one in the middle, to eighteen hundred feet below the surface.

Once the shafts are down, the next thing to be done is to dig along the area that has the copper;

“drift” is the correct term, and a drift is nothing more, as I have said, than a small tunnel which does not come out on the surface. These drifts are run out at hundred-foot intervals down the shaft and driven the circumference of the ore, until finally a huge skeleton is formed, with the main shaft for a backbone and the little tunnels for ribs.

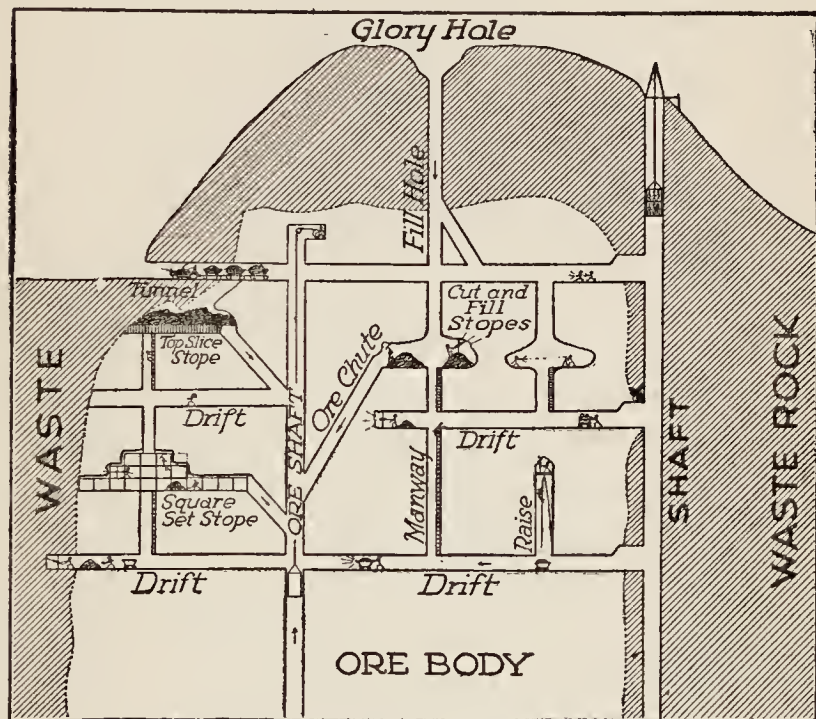
At Monte a tunnel, driven into the base of the mountain from the foot of the “incline,” taps the backbone of the mine about half-way down. The ore that is broken above this is thrown down; that from the lower levels, lifted up; and both are loaded into railway cars and pulled out by electric motors. Steam replaces electricity at the tunnel mouth, and the rock goes down the hill to the Cobre mills.

By the time the backbone and the ribs are finished—that is, the development work is done—the amount of rock to be mined is fairly well known; at least the geologist, whose business it is, thinks he has an idea of it, and a geologist is nothing more than a trained guesser. He sees ore in the wall of a drift, and guesses how far back it goes. If he guesses right, he is a good geologist.

But to return to the mine: Once the *metal* is found, the real fun begins, because it is necessary to get it out; and get it out without bringing the earth above down on one’s head.

Any excavation from which ore is taken is called

a “stope,” and a stope may be anything from a gopher-hole to the great open cuts where the rock is taken out by the steam-shovelful. There is a great variety of intensely interesting and ingenious methods for saving labor and one’s neck in the steps



CROSS SECTION SKETCH OF A COPPER MINE

that lie between the rock as nature has left it and the copper that goes to the mint to make the pennies men sell their souls for.

All the methods, however, depend first on breaking the rock. In the olden days men used to go down with a chisel and a hammer and bang away

at the rock until they cut an inch hole perhaps two feet deep. Then they filled the hole with powder and touched it off. The work was laborious—one man with a small hammer, “single-jacking,” in miner’s slang; or two men, one holding the drill and the other pounding it, “double-jacking.” There is a real thrill in holding the steel for a good double-jacker. He takes a full swing with a huge sledge-hammer, hardly looking where he strikes. If you hold the steel in the same place, he’ll go on hitting, fair and square, as fast as he can get the hammer back for another blow. But move it an inch or two to one side, and he will come down in the old spot once more, and the chances are ten to one that one of your hands is in time and space coincident with it; and that sledge-hammer is moving when it comes around, and moving fast! I know because I’ve tried it, and from an American miner I got no sympathy for my bruises but plenty of cursing for not holding the iron steady!

But only the old-timers are double-jackers now, because the air-drill has come in to do their work. The compressed-air drill is nothing but a pneumatic hammer that strikes a steel drill some four hundred times a minute. There are all kinds of air-drills—hundred-and-eighty-pound monsters mounted on iron bars wedged between the floor and the “back” to hold them for their attack; long, lean-

looking drills called "wigggle-tails" because they have a tail which comes out like a giant wasp's sting, to push the steel forward as it cuts; and lastly little "pluggers," illegitimate children of the devil, which are not mounted at all but which you hold against your stomach and force into the rock. Every one of the four hundred blows is reflected off your middle, and usually a stream of water, theoretically forced down through a hole in the steel to lay the dust, is playfully sticking its finger into your eye. I can get madder with a plugger, and do less about it, than with any other machine I've ever played with.

Machine drills now put in "rounds of holes," six or more feet deep, depending on the toughness of the rock, and will drill twenty or thirty holes a shift. Instead of the old black powder, high explosive (nitroglycerine held in suspension in sticks of wood pulp) is used. In spite of its power, it is fairly safe to handle and has to be set off with a special detonator. However, the very ease with which it is manipulated is in itself a menace, because it is not quite so harmless as it seems.

About a week after I arrived at the mine, a typical accident took place on my run which killed two men and blinded a third. Green men had been blasting boulders in a stope, and one of the charges hadn't gone off. The right thing to have done

was to drill a new hole *in another part* of the rock. But, not knowing the correct procedure, one of the men went back after the smoke had settled, found the boulder untouched, and put his drill into the same hole, on top of the dynamite, and turned on the air. There was a man standing beside him, looking on, and another shoveling, fifteen feet away. The latter was blinded and almost lost his reason. The other two were, of course, killed instantly. It was the very thing the safety-first men most warned against: never drill in a "missed" hole. It is n't always bliss to be ignorant.

With modern drills and high explosives, with the possibility of breaking thousands of tons of rock a day, has come the necessity for an organization of methods, a systematic mining which is like the laying out of a great battle. And as in a great battle, carried on far from the light of day, underground, against the forces of nature, there are, as I have said, many methods of attack. Each has a name, and even as there are men in an army trained to fight in trenches, in open country, or in the air, so are there miners brought up and trained to fight their battle with the earth, some in one kind of stope, some in another.

The simplest system we used is called "cut and fill." It is started by simply drilling the roof or "back" of a drift full of holes and shooting it down,



THE ENGINEERING CREW OF DIVISION ONE

Salomon, *Ayudante de Ingeniero*, and the author, whose life he saved

and repeating the process until a huge chamber, perhaps a hundred, two hundred feet long is opened. Rock is broken around a "raise," which is nothing but a vertical elevator shaft through the rock, with no elevator in it. And the rock that is broken is thrown down through a system of these raises, until, perhaps three hundred feet below, after a long, thunderous trip down, it is caught in a pocket in the rock and is drawn off through gates, into buckets in the shaft, to be hoisted to the top. It is easier to break rock down, so the work crawls up around the raise, the broken ore falling behind. That is the "cut" part.

But after a time the back is so far above the floor that it can't be reached without a staging; besides, it is getting dangerous. It begins to "slough off," and great slabs keep dropping down. If there is a man under one, he won't have to mine any longer; he can stay underground for the rest of time. First there is a little warning dribble of fine pebbles, perhaps a tiny noise, and then—*zump!*—down out of the darkness comes a piece about the size of a trolley car. So, to remedy these little unpleasantnesses, the stope is filled with waste rock to within five or six feet of the back before more rock is broken. This is the "fill" part and it steadies the ground so that the work may go on.

It was to provide fill for the great stopes under-

ground that the mountains on the surface were hollowed out and dropped in. La Luna Fill Hole, the main chute down which the waste is thrown, runs nearly two thousand feet down into the mine. A hundred feet away, through solid rock, the thunder of the falling stone can be heard. The huge boulders break themselves up by bouncing from side to side en route, until at the bottom they are small enough to be drawn out through holes and distributed.

This cut-and-fill system is very simple, but the mine worked by it is rather a curious sight. Usually there is a long rock chamber, the far end of which is lost in darkness, with an arching vault of a roof perhaps twenty feet above the fill. There is a hole in the center of the stope which leads up like a chimney above this queer house. To get in, one must climb, like Santa Claus, down the chimney, on a rickety ladder or often only a rope. The stope is filled with the roar of two air-drills, and lighted dimly by half a dozen little lights stuck here and there near the workmen. Two men are drilling, and four others, stripped to the waist, are mucking broken rock into the chute. As one enters, both drills stop suddenly and the silence is ominous. But it is the quiet before the storm, because presently, if one is unlucky enough to be an engineer, the *contratista* will burst into violent protest of the measurements of the week before.

Speaking of ominous silence, I am reminded of a two-hundred-dollar mistake I once made in one of these stopes. Cut and fills are difficult to measure because one has to locate enough points on the walls, which are very irregular, to compute, from the picture one makes with the information gained, the total volume of the place. Subtracting from this the volume found the week before, gives the work the contractor has done during the measuring period. But the process is a long one, and to speed it up I used only to measure the parts of the stope in which new work had been done. One week I went down and asked a *contratista*—Roberto Ramos, by the way—where he had worked. Whether he misunderstood me or not, I can't say, but he pointed out only half of the area he had covered. So, of course, I passed him only half of what was really his due, a difference of two hundred dollars. The next week, when I came down, he met me with tears in his eyes. He told me he thought I was his friend. He wanted to know what I had against him. Then he depicted, with graphic pantomime, the state of horrible woe his family was in because of my mistake. I went over my notes, found my computations were correct, and told him there was nothing I could do about it. They were correct, as far as I knew.

At last he grew angry and began to talk faster

and faster. Like an amateur radio fan, I can receive code only up to about twelve words a minute, and I was soon left far behind him. Faster and faster, wilder and wilder; he had a pick in one hand, and I began looking around for Salomon to back me up. When suddenly the flood stopped. There was dead silence. Evidences of the most horrible emotions passed over his countenance. For at least five minutes my heart stopped beating. Then the most incomprehensible transformation took place. A radiant smile broke over his face. He shrugged his shoulders and put out his hand. I didn't get all he said, but it was to the effect that what were two hundred dollars in his life: his family was n't starving any more than usual, and he could get drunk free at his brother's wedding on Saturday. And—and this was very touching, since he was really my friend and liked me—if I needed the two hundred dollars, why, he was very glad I had taken it!

And the funny thing is that it was n't pose. He was quite sure that since he had n't gotten the money, I had, and equally sincere in saying that it did n't matter and I was welcome to it. The impression under which he was laboring was n't one I wished to leave, so I spent the rest of the day running a check survey of the place. During the whole procedure he smiled in the most friendly way, and

when I finally found what was wrong he greeted with another shrug the news that he was to be paid: "*Muchas gracias, pero no le hace.*" ("Many thanks, but it does not matter.")

Cut-and-fill mining, with its great stopes gnawing their way up through the mountain, is the method chiefly used at Monte. But there are plenty of other methods of attack to be seen. There is the less spectacular "square-set" plan. This is the good old American mining method, probably employed more than any one other because it can be used in almost any ground and is fairly cheap and safe.

When a cut and fill is opened too wide, the back begins to slough off. If this happens often, and occasionally, for variety, instead of little pieces, the whole back falls in and closes the working up tight, with whatever and whoever happens to be in it, it becomes fairly evident that it would be wise to steady the roof. That is what square-setting does. A square set is a rough frame of timbers—four posts with "caps" and "ties" across the top to form a little house. The rock is broken exactly as before, but just enough is cut out to build the house in. The pieces of timber are brought down, dragged into the stope, and put together as a child's toy building or a card house is put together. Only, here are posts eight inches or more in diameter and eight to ten feet long. When the puzzle is put together, it is

wedged tight against the roof, and, once inside it, the miner is quite safe. Another frame can be placed right beside it, when the rock is broken out, or on top of it, until the card house is as extensive as desired. When it has been built up for two or three stories, it is just as wise to fill the lower stories with waste rock, leaving a little hole to crawl up through, as was done in the other method.

Square sets are not so impressive as the larger stopes. A series of them resembles an apartment-house in construction, before the partitions have been put in. There are long rows of posts, and the floor is usually littered with tools—in Mexico, at least. Two or three miners will be about, their lamps stuck on the posts, bucking a drill in one corner to cut out for a new “lead”; fitting the pieces of a set together in another part; and mucking into a chute, a black hole which opens ominously in the center of the floor.

However, square sets are not so safe as they might be. All the measuring of ground can be done from the ends of the timber and I used to go in and sit down on a convenient beam and take my notes, while Salomon hopped about from post to post with his tape. Once a little piece of rock about the size of my fist came loose and, falling between the timbers, came near breaking my head and the *contratista's* heart. My head was easy enough to explain, be-

cause the rock came right down on it. The fragment had to fall only about three feet, but that was far enough to break the rock and knock me out. (I have a remarkable facility for catching little things like that underground.) But the hurt to the *contratista's* heart was more subtle. When I came to, bloody and very profane, the old boy was standing over me wringing his hands. He was a little wizened chap with a long, straggly mustache and an aroma that penetrated. I kept on swearing, but paused long enough to assure him that I was n't killed. He shook his head and muttered:

“And to think of all the work I've done this week for nothing!” adding, “*Mucho trabajo, poco dinero*,” which means, “Much work, little pay.”

I wanted to know, immediately, what that had to do with my head.

“Oh, señor, I cannot expect you to pay me when you have had your head broken in my stope!”

Much as I regretted having to reassure him, he did get his money.

There is one other scheme of mining we used which was interesting for the strangeness of its physical aspect—the “top-slice stoping” of very heavy ground. One climbs down a raise to find, at the end of a winding passage, a cramped sort of woodchuck hole, filled with a forest of posts and inhabited by a couple of half-naked Mexicans with

bright beady eyes and a nervous way of moving. There is, very likely, an unearthly hush, because it is just as well to be listening for little noises in rock and timber which spell danger. Unless a man knows what he is doing, a "slice stope" is a "bad actor."

When the ground is too heavy for even a square set,—that is, when it is broken up and gathers weight enough to squash two-foot posts like matches,—one of the ways to avoid trouble is to start at the top instead of the bottom. But the top of the ore is often a long way underground, and the problem of guarding one's head still remains. So a rather clever practice has been devised. A whole floor, ten or fifteen feet high, is dug out and a great many props put up to hold the back, temporarily. When the excavation is finished, a stick of dynamite is tied to each post, every one gets out, and the dynamite is exploded. All the posts in the place are snapped at once, and the roof comes down, *crash!* In falling, the timbers get all tangled up, and, crushed together by the pressure above them, they form a sort of mat. When the mass has settled, the miners come up from below and dig another level out underneath it, this time propping up the mat, which is now over their heads.

And so the stope continues downward, the house being shot to pieces after every floor and a cellar dug under it. But the mat doesn't always come

down as nicely as it might, and sometimes it stays up altogether. The whole thing "takes weight," the timbers begin to "work" and sing all kinds of ghastly witch melodies—long-drawn-out whines, little eerie songs, and odd rumblings. And as the props begin to split and mushroom out at the head, streams of fine sand come in through the cracks.

In the folklore of old miners, there is a mysterious character called "Blind Tom" who is responsible for these demonstrations. It is "Blind Tom workin' " who moves the ground above one, who makes timbers grunt and groan as he labors, whose perspiration is the deadly trickle of sand before a fall. Blind Tom is very careless when he is in a hurry, and very clumsy in his sightlessness. As he strides about he is apt to step on old openings and squash them flat. Only a little hiss and a blast of air down the tunnels, the blow of a giant hammer, give the bosses warning that Blind Tom is still at his work.

Measuring these stopes was the cross Salomon had to bear throughout his career with me—a real cross because they were forever falling in and needing emergency attention. Once a stope had caved in, it was impossible to estimate the tonnage, so that when one was on its last legs the *contratista* would telephone up to the office and I would have to collect Salomon and dash down to get what I

could before the crash. My part of the job was very easy. I had to sit by the exit, with a compass that had a mirror attachment, and catch the reflection of Salomon's light, to read the direction. But to give me the necessary information, he had to dash into the most dangerous corners, where, usually, rock was raining down and the timbers were groaning horribly, and hold the light until I could find it with my instrument—a process something like shooting a gun over one's shoulder with a mirror, in the dark.

These were the only times Salomon and I had real differences. He was absolutely positive that I sat there and refused to hurry, simply that I might enjoy his perturbation, and he would come in in a violent rage and absolutely refuse to "take another shot," until I pointed out another spot, and then he would trot away, damning me to an eternal mine.

As a matter of fact, few men get hurt in these stopes, because they are so constantly on the lookout. It is in the places that give every evidence of being safe, where a man lowers his guard, that Fate strikes suddenly and without warning. The only bad accidents in "slices" come when the roof caves between a man and his escape. Then he is doomed, unless a rescue party can dig in before the rest gives way.

There are many other methods of mining—caving

systems in which men cut under a body of ore and let it fall and break itself; "shrinkage" stopes (when the broken ore is left in the excavation and men work standing upon it), and many others. They are all part of the miner's life, all bare-handed struggles with nature.

For a long time I got inspiration out of being in the front line. There was a fascination about laying out a piece of work and seeing men go in and do it as I told them. With me, of course, it was purely a mental thing, because Don, my foreman, did the real planning, and, once I had finished the engineering end, there was nothing to do but wait until the work was complete, and pay for it. But to watch it grow under my eyes entranced me.

I came to know every contractor and what he was worth, and I had the satisfaction of knowing that I was trusted. The thorn in my side was Jesus Maria. Jesus was a good-natured idiot who spent his time losing one contract after another because he would n't work more than three days a week. We were short of men, so we gave him new work in the hope that a new place might inspire him for a while. The result was disappointing. If anybody else, or the same man with a different name, had been as lazy, I really should n't have minded, but in his case the fact that "Jesus" is pronounced "Hā-sus" did n't have the effect it should.

To the Mexicans, there is no thought of sacrilege in the common use of a name which most religions have set apart. He is very much at home with his religion. He drinks wines known as "The Milk of the Virgin Mary" and "The Tears of Christ," and names his animals for saints, and his children for divinities. As an old foreman once replied when I mentioned the profanity we were in the habit of using underground, "Well, the Lord do enter into our conversation quite a bit!"

Salomon, however, was something of a free thinker. He once delivered one of the most illuminating lectures on religion I have ever heard. It was before I spoke much Spanish—I speak little enough now—and he supplemented his talk with dramatic demonstration. We were sitting under a cross by the shaft, waiting for the cage, and, thinking of the symbol over us, I asked him what he thought of prayer. He gave me the most scathing look.

"When a man has little food, his stomach is empty," he said. "Oh, how an empty stomach hurts! It is necessary to fill it with something, and words cost little." He rubbed his stomach and began to howl: "O God, help me! Mary, have pity!" Then he went on: "But a horse is loose and a hungry *hombre* steals it and sells it for a peso. In a little while he gluts himself with food. Ah, his

stomach is full and there is no room for God!" and he snapped his fingers at the cross.

I don't know exactly how this attitude affected his standing in the village, but in the mine even the most religious were very tolerant of it, and he was fond of expounding his views. I have never been associated with an underground community which had much real religious feeling; perhaps the fatality of the life explains it; I cannot tell.

With some spark of desire for truth, Salomon had picked up an amazing amount of misinformation. He was always saying, "In a little while, no more Mexico!" until I finally asked him whether it was he who was going, or his country. He said he was; he was going to Los Angeles. I asked him how he was going to get there. Well, it cost five pesos to get to the line, and, once in Arizona, he could walk over to Los Angeles. And money—you get lots of it there for doing almost nothing—twenty dollars a day even. I was going to remonstrate with him on this point, until I thought of the building trades, and felt it best to hold my tongue. When questioned as to what the city was like, he displayed similar ignorance. There were buildings, probably, as big as the whole mine frame, and trains in the street; but the air of gayety, the excitement—that was what he was going for. He would take his young wife and his remaining child along, too, and he thought

he would pick up a horse so that they could all ride around the city.

Once I had taken over the division, my afternoons became busy indeed. From the time I got on top, had a shower, and started to work in the office, until four-thirty it was work at top speed with pen, pencil, and adding-machine. The men measured in the morning, and the work done had to be figured up and paid for in the afternoon. But four-thirty and the end of the mathematical side did not mean a rest for the weary. For the "social-tea" session began. That is, the shift got off underground and the *contratistas* began to come in to get the news of how they had made out. The weeks after fiestas were the worst, because then nobody worked hard enough to make any money, and every one needed it badly. The day after a big holiday, about half the engineering force could be seen making a stealthy get-away by the back door and "hoofing it" up the hill before some particularly fiery *contratista* could locate them and hear the bad news of a poor week. A new chap from California was so upset by his first interview with one son of toil that the next week he hid in the vault and very nearly got locked in for the night.

It took me some time to get used to the Latin temperament. My old friend Roque Rios's calls were typical. He came in every Thursday, the day

on which he was measured, as regular as clockwork. I had the advantage of knowing exactly what his expenses were and how much he had cleared, usually a good margin; and, besides, I was up on a high stool behind an imposing desk. He was all politeness.

“*Buenas tardes, señor!* how are you?”

“Very well; and you?”

“Well, thank you, well!”

“You old crook, you!” aside in English.

The greetings were long and inclusive: then I read off the amounts I had passed to him. His face, which had been all smiles, set. He didn't say a word for several minutes, during which I went quietly on with my work. Then he asked me again. I repeated my statement, and he repeated his stolid wait. What went on in his mind, I think not even Heaven knew. Then, slowly at first, but with increasing rapidity, his remonstrance began. He shook his head, he stamped his foot, he grew angrier and angrier. In the first two or three interviews I could feel my spine turning into an icicle. After the opening words he became unintelligible and his expression alone conveyed his meaning. When I was thoroughly alarmed (or, at a later date, equally bored), I sought escape.

There were three avenues. First, I could let him talk himself out, which took hours. Or I pro-

duced a few maps, sometimes of his working place, sometimes not, and explained carefully what measurements I had made. It was all incomprehensible to him, but he felt the importance of being taken into my confidence and occasionally said it was all right—to cover up his ignorance, which he would not for a minute have admitted. And finally, when even this failed, I dug up the magic formula which solved all difficulties, “*Habla con el mayordomo!*” (“Tell it to the foreman!”)

The foreman didn't have to use the diplomacy that I did, and kept him waiting half an hour, to advise him finally to “Tell it to the engineer.” (I am assuming that Rios had no real grievance—and we took the utmost precautions to be sure.) After he had gone back and forth two or three times, either the foreman or I told him to go to hell, and he would then depart, humming softly, perfectly satisfied that he had treated himself as well as possible and that there was nothing further to be gained.

But in the beginning, when I found that I had to repeat this comedy with three or four *contratistas* every day, each of whom showed every symptom of being about to commit murder, I admit I formed rather a harsh opinion of the men with whom I was dealing. It took me some time to understand the Mexican even a little and to realize that the performance was a well-established custom, almost



THE DAY SHIFT GOES DOWN

Loading Mexicans in mine cages to be dropped to their working places



THE BATTLE-SCARRED MOUNTAIN-SIDE

Glory Holes seen from the trail down to the mine

a religious rite. Of course every man did not behave quite so badly, but I found that when one did, I could not at once tell him to evaporate, and back my command up, as would be necessary, with force, because such a procedure would indelibly stamp on his mind the impression that I had something to conceal; he would never quite forget it.

One must treat the Mexican with tact and make certain allowances. Mexico is not a prohibition country, but its people have all the inordinate desire for strong spirits that brought on the Volstead Act. They are not wine-drinkers, and they care nothing for to-morrow. The proof of the pudding is in an interesting bit of statistics. The production of the mine had to be constant to keep the mill running smoothly and the management counted on a working production requiring about a thousand men at work each day. But to keep a thousand men busy underground, they had to carry twelve hundred on the pay-roll. Every day in the year one man out of every five was off drunk, or recovering! The only people I have ever seen who could equal the men at Monte, for serious drinking, are the post-war American tourists in Europe.

CHAPTER V

“EN LA MINA”

I WAS quite familiar with life underground before I went to Mexico; my apprenticeship had been long and arduous. I was used to an existence which called for the donning of muddy armor and a daily adventure into another world. I suppose most people have a vague longing to lead a double life, and the mining industry gives one a wonderful opportunity to gratify such a desire. What greater contrast could one ask for: civilization with all its refinements, life in the bright sunlight, against the sternest of battles with the roughest side of nature, fought in the everlasting darkness of the inside of the world—and all within a few seconds' ride in an iron cage.

Mechanically, one enters the mine at Monte in a commonplace enough way for a miner. The shaft is a vertical hole in the ground, about ten by twenty-five feet. It is framed with timber and has guides for three cages: two five-by-five man hoists, double-deck affairs which fly up and down with lightning speed, and one big elevator for lowering supplies.

I never knew why it was, but this monster, a steel box a dozen feet square, seemed to draw upon itself more than its share of casualties.

The first two men I had ever seen killed in a mine, were killed in this elevator. They had been taking down long timbers the length of which had necessitated raising the bonnet on the top of the cage, a sort of folding roof. When their timbers were unloaded below, with characteristic thoughtlessness they neglected to close the top over them; they got aboard and gave the signal to hoist. The cage leaped up, pulled by the great electric drums on top, the open side of the roof caught the timbers in the shaft, and before the engineer above noticed the increased load on his motors the loose bonnet had pulled a hundred feet of timbering into the cage, and trapped the occupants. They were found mangled beyond recognition. The terrific power of the hoist, which had been their guarantee of safety, had, through their own carelessness, brought their world in on top of them.

Once, when I was going down in this cage, we had a very bad five minutes, being threatened with cremation. The signals to the engineer above can be given only by means of electric annunciators and cords at the stations, and once he has moved the cage from a landing-place he is out of touch with its occupants until he lands them where the last

signal directed. One morning, bound for the very bottom of the mine, I got on at the surface with two native mechanics who were going down to adjust one of the electric locomotives. One of them had a barrel of cotton waste with him, which he deposited in the middle of the cage. The cage-tender gave the signal and down we dropped, but hardly had we lost the last gleam of sunlight when one of the mechanics, unused to the mine, struck a match to light his lamp. On cages this is strictly forbidden, and I don't think he will ever do it again. His match caught the gas from his lamp, and this, blazing up, set fire to the cotton waste. Half soaked with oil, it burst into a pillar of flame, in the midst of us, and before any one in the cage could move, burst the barrel and spread out into a terrifying bonfire. All this with the cage dropping silently into the earth, and four of us locked in that iron stove with no way to get out or to summon aid. Moreover, the big cage has not the sprightly speed of its smaller brothers and goes slowly on its way; there was a good five minutes ahead of us, long enough to finish us all completely.

Our salvation (which the reader must have guessed because I am here to tell the story) came through no earthly hand. A big sheet of iron, five or six feet square, was leaning up against one side of the cage, and suddenly this fell with a crash,

across half the fire! I was crouched, petrified by the suddenness of the whole thing, in a far corner. I don't think the Mexicans even knew they were alive, they were so frightened. The thing was over in a second; the remainder of the fire was harmless in itself and flickered out a minute later. However, when we pulled up at the bottom of the shaft, the air in the cage was chokingly thick and the temperature almost unbearable.

In the morning these cages are loaded with an efficiency that would make the subway officials of Manhattan look upon their own life-work as a dismal failure. At the seven-o'clock siren the gates open and the men rush forward, anxious to be underground where they can rest in peace. Entering one of the small cages, the first man places himself in the corner with his face to the wall, like a naughty child, and the others pack in, animated sardines, ten or twelve souls in the little five-by-five box. The gates are slammed and the other deck of the thing loaded. Then, at a second signal, the cage is dropped into the earth. I always used to think how much pleasanter it would be if one could just jump into the empty shaft with a parachute and float softly down. But, then, I suppose one would have to have a balloon waiting at the bottom, in order to get back to the surface.

It usually took the best part of half an hour to

get five hundred men underground. One of the bones of contention in the American union camps is whether a shift should go down on its own time or the company's. In Arizona the famous "collar-to-collar" law requires that men may be kept underground only eight hours, the time being taken from the collar of the shaft going down to the same point coming up. It really cuts an hour off the working time, right at the beginning, and with another half-hour at the company's expense, for lunch, brings the miner's shift very near the much-discussed six-hour day.

As I have said, I was quite familiar with this routine long before I went to Mexico. But underground, the human touch of another race at once began to make itself felt. Step off the cage at a level station in the United States and the first thing that meets the eye will probably be a safety-first sign. In Mexico, side by side with such warnings, are little shrines—elaborate crosses decked with faded wreaths of flowers; a crudely modeled Christ crucified, or a grotesque representation of the Virgin Mary; a series of small crosses with a large one in the middle and perhaps a lighted candle or two.

In southern Mexico, where the Church is dominant, the underground shrines are very elaborate. The miner, going in to work, always stops and

crosses himself in the thorough Mexican manner. In Monte, where American influence has made itself felt, the faith is not quite so strong. There are shrines at every station, but they are dirty and neglected and an abbreviated genuflection in passing is their portion of respect. However, if the people here have lost their faith, they have not gained any appreciable caution to replace it. The fatalistic attitude of the race still maintains: one will die when one will die, obviously not before; and that is the last word that can be said. Once their hearts had begun to beat again, the mechanics of the cage episode took the whole thing as a matter of course. What impressed them was not the danger of such asinine carelessness but the fact that that was not their day to die.

Fortunately, the Americans cannot take this attitude, even officially. Killing and injuring men is an expensive amusement under modern laws in radical Mexico, I was told. It costs five thousand pesos to kill a man; and his widow, if he has one, must be supported. Moreover, if this lady has the desire to travel, she may take her family, which in the circumstances assumes gigantic proportions, and go to Mexico City at the company's expense. The reason for this ruling is a little obscure, but must come from solicitude on the part of the Government, for the widow's mental ease. Certainly, to be in the

crowded city, hundreds of miles from home, with only a meager pension to live on, can do her no physical good, so that it must be for her mind's sake she is allowed to go. At least the problems of metropolitan life, as depicted in the cinema, will take her thoughts off her deceased husband.

To save the capital from such invasions, and perhaps from some consideration of the company's capital as well, every possible safety-device is used. There was an American in charge of the safety-department at Monte. He was a youngish man with a quiet manner and gray hair. After three or four beers he used to tell, to whatever audience was assembled, the story of how his hair had turned.

When he was still in his twenties he was safety-inspector in a big caving-system mine in the States. An entire mountain had been opened below, with a view to letting it cave of its own weight, when it took matters into its own hands and without warning dropped the five feet it was undercut. A few of the drifts, heavily bulkheaded against just such an emergency, remained open, and the shift at work escaped. But the count was not exact, and the inspector went back into the mine to make sure all the men were safe. He entered a tunnel and had walked half a mile in, when it caved behind him. Terrified, he ran on, only to be confronted twenty feet farther along by another cave-in. He was

trapped in a little space twenty or thirty feet long, completely isolated. There was nothing to do, so he relit his lamp, which the blasts of air from the first cave-in had extinguished, and sat down and waited. Soon he noticed that the roof over his head was settling. It came down, inch by inch, timber and all, gradually closing the little space that was left him. For six hours he sat and watched it come down on him. After one hour he could not stand; after three, he measured the roof at four feet above the floor. At the end of six hours it appeared to stop, just two and a half feet above the ground!

To lie in a hole two and a half feet in height and wait for the end to come, is one of the most hideous situations I can imagine. The inspector admitted he should have known that once the motion had stopped he was safe, because it meant that the ground had arched over him and was firm, but he said he was too far gone for anything to make an impression. The ground was cracked, and plenty of air came to him, but he lay there while his lamp burnt out, all through the night and the next day. At the end of thirty-six hours, the rescue crew, working day and night to get to him, made the connection and pulled him out.

He felt fine, and went home with his wife and ate a good dinner. It was not until a week later that the memory of his experience began to break him.

He found he could n't sleep for imagining the ceiling creeping down on him, and he would get up and go down town to buy a bottle of whisky, and then go off into the hills, alone, to drink it. He finally had to leave camp for a while, but before that, he told us, little by little his hair had turned, first gray, then, here and there in patches, white. I wondered, but did not ask him, whether or not the whisky had anything to do with it.

That man knew more gruesome tales and horrible statistics than any individual I have ever met. Two of his statements I remember as interesting. One of these was that men falling more than a thousand feet were always found with their shoes off. I do not know how many shaft accidents he had inspected, but he asserted that in every case the men were found without their shoes. He told us that upon one occasion an iron bucket full of men was setting out to the bottom of one of the deepest shafts in the United States, over five thousand feet in depth, when the cable broke. The wife of one of the miners in it was handing her husband his dinner-pail, and their hands were touching. The bucket fell the whole distance. When men went down to bring up the remains, not one of the bodies had a shoe on: leather fragments were found all the way up and down the shaft, with broken laces, caught in the timber. I have taken part in many

discussions of the reason for this extraordinary fact, and heard innumerable theories advanced, but the most probable seems that swelling of the feet breaks the laces and that then the shoes are knocked off as the falling bodies strike against the walls; or they may be pulled away by the rush of wind.

The other statement the inspector made was that when a man was turning over a car to dump the contents into a chute, if the car itself fell in, he would never let go but would hang on and follow it down to destruction. This is more natural, because at the first thrill of danger—the whole thing happening too fast for him to think—the man tightens his grip on the first thing he can lay his hands on, and that is the car. And the more terrified he becomes, the tighter will he hold to that vehicle which, if it has far to fall, proves to be a chariot of death.

I am afraid this is becoming a gruesome chapter, but I do not mean it to be. Life underground is not a gruesome thing: it is weird and different, but it is still intensely human, and human life is not essentially gruesome. Perhaps, though, it is a little more exciting than most lives, and the high points more dramatic. Often, with the irony of existence, the most horrible incidents become the most ludicrous.

For instance, deaths underground lead to extraordinary complications. There is a law in Mexico that if a man is killed below the surface, his body

must be left until the officials of the town come down and make an inspection. There used to be all sorts of mix-ups in consequence. For example: a man was working around a chute and fell in. One of the regulations was that every chute must be covered with what is called a "grizzly"—that is, a grating of iron or heavy timber to let rocks pass only up to a certain limit in size, and to protect men from their own carelessness. The grizzly on this particular chute was very heavy, made of twelve-by-twelve timber spaced just thirteen inches apart. The man was alone and no one knew how he did it, but he fell through the thirteen inches into the hole. It was sixty feet deep, with broken rock at the bottom. He must have lain there some time, because no one missed him until another miner, coming up a man-way by the chute, heard his groans.

The alarm was given, the first-aid and rescue crews hastened down, together with all the American officials of the mine, including myself. The hole in the grizzly, through which he had fallen, was so small that it was impossible to get the wire basket, used in mine rescue, through the opening, and the only thing left to do was to draw the ore in the chute out from under him. Ore-cars were run up under the chute gate and the rock pulled slowly out, letting the injured man down on top of it. We drew out four car-loads, and finally the man's foot appeared

in the gate. We took hold, and worked him out. He was in his death-agony, and just as he slid out he gave a little shiver and died.

Now what was to be done? The man was dead; but he had died just as we were taking him out. It was obviously of no use to leave him there. Besides, where he was, he blocked all the work on the level. The superintendents made their decision and we took him on top. Unfortunately, the chief went back to his office. In ten minutes an armed delegation called on him and escorted him to the *carcel* (the jail). They also nabbed the inspector and looked for the foreman and me, but, luckily for us, we had stayed underground. They finally settled the affair, but not before it had degenerated into a farce, with all the Americans taking to cover and the young bloods of the police force having a grand man-hunt. As no one knew clearly what it was all about, no one realized that the chief and the inspector had been arrested for violation of the law, and the two had to dodge rats and vermin in the local cooler all night.

But, despite all this, I have always liked life underground. When I was a miner in Arizona I used to get a thrill out of being “on the firing line” that convinced my friends in New York, when I tried to explain it to them, of my blood brotherhood with Eugene O’Neil’s “Hairy Ape.” I liked to feel that I was at the top of the social system. Here I was

breaking rock in the center of the earth. A million-dollar plant above had been built to compress air for me to use in my machine. There was a crew of men who had no other occupation than to string the pipes and hoses that brought it to me. The first thing in the morning the little "tool-nipper," a fifteen-year-old boy, dashed down ahead of me to bring sharp steel into my stope, that there might be nothing to delay my work. When I wanted to blast, I called down and a "powder-monkey" ran to fetch me my dynamite. There were two men below employed by the company (representing the world at large) to muck away the rock that I broke. Behind them waited an army to handle it—hand-trammers to take it to the motor-pockets, locomotive engineers on electric dinkies, with long trains, to pull it to the shaft; great hoists to lift it up; and, beyond them, huge mills whose costs ran into millions, and thousands of miles of railroad tracks to speed the metal on to where the world waited for it. And I was the man that started it all! It is worth living to be able to feel like that. Life was never dull as long as I had such an attitude.

Speaking of life never being dull reminds me of an incident of the Mexican race-track that furnished me a motto I have never forgotten. In a ranch in Sonora they used to hold informal horse-races, and on the day of a big event the jockey of the favorite

fell ill. There seemed to be nobody in camp capable of riding his horse, until the cook announced that in his youth he had taken many a winner across the line. Now, it happened that this cook was the most unpopular man in camp. Both his tongue and his seasoning were a little too sharp for the ranchers' taste. But there was heavy betting on the horse, and an exhibition convinced them that the ex-jockey-cook knew his business. So they put him up.

The race was a terrific one, but in the last half-mile the favorite took a head's lead and was coming down the track like a tornado, when suddenly an unforeseen catastrophe took place. They were racing on the desert, and the favorite stepped in a gopher-hole and fell, fell and broke its leg. When the crowd rushed up, both horse and rider lay apparently dead. A group of cow-boys from the cook's ranch, all of whom had bet heavily on the horse, took command of the situation. They were old-timers and not given to display of emotion. They looked at the cook's prostrate form and called for pick and shovel. When these implements arrived, the men went to the spot on which the horse had fallen, and around the gopher-hole they dug a grave. They even carried the body over and laid it by the side of the excavation at which they were working.

When the grave was two feet deep, and the men were picking away in it furiously, a strange thing

happened: the corpse sat up. And as he sat up he turned about and his feet sank into the hole that had been dug. The grave-diggers paused in their work and scratched their heads. A look of dismay went around: the hated man had simply been stunned (it can only be surmised whether or not they had suspected as much; at least they had taken no steps to verify any belief they might have had). The little jockey-cook looked at them, at the crowd behind them, and at the grave in which his feet hung. And he shook his head as he said very slowly: "Wall, life may be checkered, but—Gawd!—it ain't never dull!"

Which is rather a good way of summing up life in a mine, as well as that of the race-track. To carry the comparison farther: one is continually coming to with one's feet in the grave and a hopeful group about, waiting to see one buried.

Salomon and I had a number of pleasant little excursions to the edge of the great unknown. Climbing about, it was necessary to be a good deal of an acrobat and more of a monkey, and to carry a rabbit's foot always. The worst places were the raises. In Monte they drove what were called "bean-hole" connections between levels, five-by-seven shafts up through the rock, without timbering. As the miner worked up, he wedged posts across the raise and, standing on these, drilled over his head.



THE ASCENT TO HEAVEN

The incline railway is the last stage of the trip up the mountain



COMING UP FIFTH AVENUE TO FORTY-SECOND STREET

Any morning in front of the mine office

But when he came to blast these holes, the terrific force of the falling rock usually carried everything down before it. Ladders and other modern conveniences were impossible, and entrance into the raise, the day after blasting, was up a rope which one had no guarantee was not half shot in two at the top. Moreover, drilling with water to lay the dust kept these ropes impregnated with slime and as slippery as a greased pole. And yet, climbing up and down and hauling the heavy drilling-machine up after them, the miners drive five feet a day up into the rock!

Once a week I had to measure all these openings. If it could be so arranged, usually Salomon went up and I waited below, under cover from the rain of rocks which would follow his ascent. He was a little nervous at first, but I think I changed his entire attitude by a rather tactless but timely remark the second week we went down. I had been studying my Spanish lesson the night before, and was trying to memorize a few phrases from the copy-book. One that stuck in my mind was “*¿Tiene la valor hacerle?*” which means “Have you the courage to do it?” or, more colloquially, “Have you nerve enough?” We were to measure a particularly mean raise down which small rocks were continually falling and Salomon was frightened. Two or three times I told him to go up, and then the phrase popped into my head,

and I said with great scorn, “*¿No tiene la valor?*” The resultant emotions registered on Salomon’s face were not pleasant to witness. He appeared to be undecided whether to murder me at once or to climb the rope first and murder me afterward. Luckily, he chose the rope, and the climb took the murder out of him. From that day on he never hesitated.

About half the time I had to go up with him, and on one occasion he saved my life very neatly and made me feel ashamed of my initial insult, which I am sure he never quite forgot. We had to ascend a raise of eighty feet, the rope into which was secured at the bottom and passed up, through a pulley at the top, and down again. We had both made the ascent up the free end satisfactorily and finished our work of setting plugs in the walls for directions for the miner, and I started down. When I got half-way, some perverse devil loosened the end of the rope below. I bounced once against the wall, my light went out, and my heart tried to escape through my windpipe. My former life did what it could to pass in review before me, and I held to that rope as I hope never to have to hold to anything again. Then there was a scream from above, Salomon’s lamp, a flaming rocket, came hurtling down, and the rope grew taut. My arms were almost pulled out of the sockets, and I hit heavily against the wall again, but I was safe. Salomon had seen the rope jump and

had thrown himself on the free end and balanced my weight. Doing it, he had been drawn up into the pulley and narrowly escaped losing both hands, which might easily have been squashed in the wheel, but he had saved my life. He took a hitch in the block, and I slid down the forty feet below me in the dark. And, when he had gotten himself together, Salomon followed.

Salomon was a queer chap when confronted with danger: one never knew whether he was going to be exceptionally brave and possessed of a presence of mind the above suggests, or supremely ridiculous. Once, when I was in a hurry, I climbed from one level to another, down one of the main manways in the mine. It was equipped with fifteen-foot ladders with a landing between each two, and was used as a through route for the power-cables and water-mains as well as a human highway. In my descent I noticed that the ladders were wet from some leak above, and here and there as I went down I felt a tremor under my hand. It happened that just as I had reached the level I was bound for, Salomon following, I got wedged in a narrow place and knocked my note-book out of my pocket. It fell the fifteen feet to the next landing below, and I told the boy to climb down and bring it up to me. He started obediently down the ladder, descended three rungs, and gave the most blood-curdling scream, at the same

time throwing himself backward off the ladder. Lighting on the landing, he crouched, trembling, against the wall, swearing in a horrible, distracted way until I feared he had gone mad and went down after him.

When I reached the third rung, I discovered the trouble. The minute my hand touched it, I felt a good stiff electric shock run through me; the electric cable had grounded against the wet ladder and was doing effective guard duty. I remembered some advice an electrician had once given me, and I took a firm grip and went on down; it was nothing to knock a man out. But my helper, at the bottom, was completely demoralized. Even my re-ascent did not reassure him: he said my body was big enough to absorb the current, but that it tore his bones apart. Ten minutes of persuading got him to touch the ladder gingerly, but of course his light touch on the charged object gave an infinitely greater shock than a firm grip would have, and his return engagement with the ladder finished him. He climbed down the ninety feet to the next level and walked a mile out to the shaft to get back up to me, and for the rest of the week (whenever hard work was suggested) stated that he was incapable of physical exertion, so horribly had the current "racked" him.

As in the case of the electric shock he believed me

protected by my size, he was always accounting for any peculiarity of mine by my height. He got a tremendous “kick” out of my six feet two. Surveying stations or points underground are all plugs set in the roof, usually about eight feet above the floor, and it was a source of endless amusement not only to Salomon but to every Mexican lucky enough to be in the vicinity to see me reach up to hang a plumb-bob from one. The men would gather from every direction and stand about howling with delight. What is essentially humorous in being able to reach a foot higher than one’s fellow-men, I have n’t yet been able to ascertain, but the men were always joking about it, telling me how fortunate I should be in case of a flood, because I should be the last man to drown, and declaring that if I fell down in the middle of the mine I should assuredly land with my head out at the shaft!

The psychology of life underground always reminded me of the psychology of life overseas during the war. An organization of men, trained and under discipline, fights face to face with death. If the individual thinks about the fact, has it on his mind, he will make a sorry miner or soldier; but, on the other hand, if he completely ignores it, his career will be lamentably short. The result is an assumption of it

without a consciousness. But unconsciously a morale, an *esprit de corps* is created which makes for a sort of fellowship.

It was this spirit that built up a remarkable psychological safety-system in a mine in which I once worked, where there was no safety-first department whatever. The camp was second-generation Cornish, the kind of place where fathers brought their sons underground with them when the boys reached the age of fourteen, and taught them the trade. We were quartz-gold mining, using virtually no timber to hold up the ground, and the work might have been very dangerous, but the generations of workers, sprung from a long line of tin-miners of Cornwall, had adopted an attitude all their own. In Arizona a careless man is ridden by the bosses; in Mexico, if he is too bad, he is discharged; in this Cornish mine he was simply laughed at!

Carry dynamite and caps in the same box and no one would reprimand, but the luckless soul who did it would be known from then on as a "damned fool." No one would talk seriously with him; no one would talk to him at all who could help it; everybody would just laugh at him. He would work alone, he would eat alone, he would be in none of the little jokes about the mine. It does not take long for such treatment to make an impression on even the stupidest man. Without the little fellowship possible, life in

a mine is hell; the man who is thus ostracized, if he remains in the work at all, will soon mend his ways.

I suggested trying to create such a morale at Monte, and the inspector liked the idea, but it was very different where the spirit of bravado was so strong. For example, I was once surveying near a chute-gate which was leaking badly and raining boulders across the drift it opened on—a very dangerous place indeed. A chute-tender was standing there, himself in a perilous position, when an inspector came by. The *chutero* told him to look out, which the inspector did with alacrity, for one flying piece came within an inch of his head. He promptly went around another way to the stope above and told the miner a good deal about his ancestors and where he himself would be if he didn't fix that chute. When he had gone, the *chutero* dashed up the ladder to the stope, and I heard him apologizing, with tears in his voice, for having given the miner away.

“Comrade, comrade, I am sorry! I did not know he was an inspector or I would have kept my mouth shut!”

One of the many rules the inspectors made for protecting the men was one against blasting in the middle of a shift, and it was in connection with a disregard of this rule that I experienced what I consider the world's narrowest escape. I cannot wholly understand it yet. I was walking down a drift, my

man Friday at my heels as usual, when we came to a place where the side of the drift had been cut back twenty or more feet to start a stope. There was no reason why I should have been cautious; it was ten in the morning, and there was no danger-signal in the drift. I remember I was whistling softly to myself, thinking of nothing in particular, when without warning, as I came abreast of this opening, a quick flash of flame shot out of the darkness at my right, with the report of a pistol.

Now, mine noises are peculiar; they are not like any other noises—are, in fact, so different that one has to become acquainted with them before they can be interpreted. A green man underground will be terrified by the passing of a train, its thunder echoing through the rock, and think nothing of the little squeaks a timber gives just before it breaks. One gets so that in the midst of the most awful din of roaring drills and falling ore one can detect the minutest sounds of warning in the ground.

All these noises, harmless or fraught with peril, become familiar and have a specific reaction connected with them. It is the unexpected that petrifies. That report like a pistol was totally unlike anything I had ever before heard underground. It froze me in my tracks, in the middle of a step, half turned toward the spot whence the flame had come. It stopped Salomon, too. The light from our lamps

lost itself in gloom a few yards away. There was nothing but a circle of light before us, and silence. Then—*crack!*—a second report, a blast of wind, and the snap of pebbles hitting the wall about us. Both our lights were out, and terror, stark naked, had my heart in a vise. I could not have moved if the doors of heaven had opened at my side. I did not know that they were open at that moment.

In a blank, meaningless eternity of time, four more reports came, one after another, each with its blast of wind and its rain of rock. Then only silence and darkness. I don't know how long we stood there, but I know that neither of us made a move to relight his lamp until another light came out of the unknown and approached us. Carrying the light was the miner of the stope. When he saw us he turned ghastly white over his own lamp and began crossing himself. Then we snapped out of it, and I found what had happened. We had stood in the face of six holes loaded with dynamite, and watched all six of them, twenty feet away, blow out! If any one of them had done what it was supposed to do, had the dynamite gone off as well as the cap and broken the rock about it, both of us should have been killed instantly, battered to pieces.

The chances of the first hole going off were about twenty to one. According to the science of blasting, the first shot should have broken the burden of rock,

and the other five broken the ground into the cut the first made. The first having missed, the likelihood of the rest breaking was less, but still horribly threatening. I figured that the chances of the six holes all missing were at least one in a hundred—probably more. If the miner had been experienced and loaded them correctly, there would have been no chance at all. But if he had, I suppose he would have known enough to guard the drift down which we came, so no one knows how it would have worked out. At any rate, that was the closest I have ever come to eternity, and I 'll admit it took a good many beers in the afternoon to quiet my nerves enough to allow me to eat my dinner and sleep on it.

Speaking of dinner brings me to another difference between the American and the Mexican miner. They certainly appreciated their food, those Mexicans! When I worked underground in Arizona, we used to carry our lunches down in paper bags, and hang them by strings from timbers, to protect them from the rats until it was time for us to snatch our meal in the half-hour allowed. No such silly haste and cold food for the Mexican! The lunch system is very highly developed. In the first place, the men take a good hour; and, in the second, they have hot food sent down to them. The company builds big trucks fitted with shelves, one for each level, with a large label on each—"1200," "1300," "1400," and

so on. At eleven-thirty these are parked outside the gates of the shaft inclosure, and the wives and children of the miners rush up with tins of hot food and load them on the truck for the level their breadwinners are working on. The tins are usually made of old lard-pails, stacked one inside another, like a pile of flower-pots. Each layer contains a different dish, the first course on top, coffee and cigars in the bottom—I presume. (I never carried one.)

When the trucks are loaded, they are hurried into the shaft and lowered to the respective levels. In each station a lunch club meets and for an hour toys with home-made delicacies and conversation. The more exclusive *contratistas* send one of their helpers out to meet the dining-car and have their dinner brought in to the stope, where they eat in feudal arrogance, seated on a rock, with their knights grouped at their feet.

I have seen the super-luxury of wine with lunch, but its consumption is not encouraged by the authorities. Alcohol and safety-first do not mix. I speak from experience. We had a big dinner one Sunday evening, after a tennis tournament, and as there were sixteen entries all of whose toasts must be drunk “bottoms up,” a marvelous time was had by all. My foreman was “on the wagon.” Like most people in this lamentable condition, he was slightly unappreciative of the jollity, and perhaps he

resented some of the innocent jests at his expense. Be that as it may, at seven o'clock the next morning he came into the engineers' office and announced that he wanted me to make a complete inspection underground with him.

My self-assertion was slightly below par that morning, and I followed the foreman meekly. I don't know whether or not I have mentioned it, but the temperature in the mine was between eighty and ninety in most places, and the air was close, with the dank smell of underground workings. The morning was a highly unpleasant one. I went down the drifts, bouncing against the wall on each side and falling into the drainage ditches about every ten feet, and in each working place Mr. Stewart would sit down and add insult to injury. He would take two or three long breaths and exclaim: "Gad! I feel fine! Nothing like exercise in the morning!" and then, having received a malevolent look from me, "Tell me, old man: was it really worth it?" The only shred of manhood I had left went into answering him, "Yes, it was worth every ounce of it!" I don't know why lying should have given me so much satisfaction, but I felt that to weaken would be to lose all.

The Mexicans have a charming word, *crudo*, which in its inclusive sense denotes all the after effects of

having sipped too freely: hangover, headache, disposition, tendency to morning-after reform, and one's attitude toward one's wife—all in one. I have no doubt the demand for such a word was so great that it was coined to fill the need, but it is the most soul-satisfying expression I know.

When one is in the humor to appreciate it, a mine is really a very beautiful thing. I have often wished I had some knack with pencil or brush, that I might portray the picturesque beauty of light and shadow below the surface. The naked men—their brown skin glistening in the lamplight, their bodies literally rippling with muscles—swinging a hammer or an ax with great powerful strokes; a man fighting a drill, seen behind a cloud of fog the wet exhaust of compressed air throws about him, the long, radiating fingers of light feeling their way through the mist; the little engineer crouched on the humped back of his electric mine locomotive, flying down the tunnel, the headlight of the machine playing with the twists of glistening rail before him.

And the mystery of it all! A light passes, a hundred feet down the drift. It is carried by a man, but you cannot see him: who is this gnome wandering in and out through the earth? The young Irish-American engineer who broke me in used to call

such apparitions "ships that pass in the night," and some Celtic love of romance came out in him, for he used to say to me:

"To be able to see things like that—that 's what counts. Ah, man! if it were n't for such, I 'd never be wasting my life in the dark! The mystery of one light that comes and goes, and me not knowing who or what it is, means more to me than the pay-check. I can put whoever I like behind it, in my head, and no one 's the wiser!"

And, too, the Mexicans are always singing—curious, monotonous tunes. Their voices have a quality that goes through one. I used to like to be below when the afternoon shift came up. The cages were loaded from the bottom levels first, and any one only a few hundred feet down could hear them coming up, by the wave of sound that preceded them. Each load began to sing as the gates shut, and the melody would float up the shaft-way, made even more unusual by the fact that the singers were approaching with the speed of a train. The sound, first faint and soft, would grow, swelling in volume until, as the cage passed the level one was on, it would roll forth in one second of *fortissimo* and then sweep away as the chorus was whisked up over one's head. There was a romance, a beauty in it all, stranger than anything that ever grew in the imagination of Jules Verne.

CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING THE MEXICAN TOWN

WHEN a man has been working in close contact with other men for a certain number of hours a day, after which each goes his own way, he is, naturally, curious to know what his companions in arms do with the rest of the twenty-four hours. He knows that his own life is commonplace, but hopes to find romance in theirs—and if romance is not to be found, at least understanding.

So, very early in my stay, I began to try to penetrate the barrier of tradition and racial difference of which the four-o'clock whistle and subsequent parting of the ways daily reminded me. My entrée into the homes of the men was secured, at first, by my quest for a horse on which to spend my Sunday respite from mathematical calculations. I discovered that most of my *contratistas* owned mounts of some kind, and I used to trot down the hill in the evenings to exercise my vocabulary of a few dozen phrases (and my legs in the long climb back) to discuss their respective merits.

The first thing that astonished me was to find the

miners still in their "digging clothes." One's imagination can give a fair idea of the condition of garments worn all day by men working in stifling heat, and wet down at intervals by a pleasant mixture of oil, water, and mud. The American miner coming off shift spends fifteen minutes a day in the shower, with mechanic's soap, and standing, one of a circle of men, scrubs his neighbor's back. The black cuttings from sulphide ore work into the skin and cover the driller with a dark coating which by comparison makes a coal-heaver seem a brother to Phœbe Snow. Machine-oil and incidental iron-rust from the drills mix beautifully, forming a red-black paste which is most conveniently removed from one's person by scrubbing the epidermis and dirt off together. And in addition to the entire range of human odors, "digging clothes" will pick up a stale smell of dead powder fumes and blend the whole into a revolting effluvium. Yet here I found one of my best *contratistas*, a man who had been making twenty dollars a day in gold, for two weeks, seated in front of his door, smoking his evening cigarette as calmly as possible, still arrayed in his uniform of toil.

The first man I called on was a chap called "Angel Solis," who had made himself fabulously rich—at least so I presumed from his pay-roll figures—by running two or three workings at once. He was



THE TOWN PUMP

A typical side-street with the community well in the center hidden by shrubbery



TRAFFIC PROBLEMS

A burro train waits on the younger generation

one of the very few who had the executive ability to operate his stopes at a profit without doing any manual labor himself; most *contratistas* worked with their men to "make her pay." When I first noticed the fortune he was making, I asked my foreman if such success was usual with him, and when I was told that it was, I said to myself, "Well, here at least is one rich Mexican!" A man of ability, earning much, he should have a model home. I finally ferreted out his house in a gully below camp, a little adobe building roofed over with what were evidently ancient iron fire-doors from the mine, salvaged from some dump-heap. It had a chimney which consisted of half a dozen coffee cans telescoped one in another and raised itself proudly in a sort of haphazard spiral. There were one or two tiny windows, evidently built in, so dirty that one could not see through them, and a large opening in front which was the door.

Angel greeted me from his seat by this portal and, knowing my errand, sent a dirty little urchin to fetch the steed I desired to see. Through the open doorway I inspected the house as we chatted, neither of us understanding a great deal of what the other was saying. The house was a one-room affair; in one corner leaned a dissolute-looking iron bed, the tangle of blankets on it unmade. There was a sort of cot in another corner; a battered wash-stand, obviously

unused except as a repository for what belonged nowhere else; and two heavy chests of drawers. The culinary department, a small stove piled with greasy pots and pans, had its station between the chests; and the dining-room equipment of a wooden table surrounded with tired-looking chairs completed the furnishings. The walls were decorated with yellowed cuts from American Sunday papers and bright-colored lithographs of vacant-looking deities with eyes raised to the cobwebbed under side of the iron roof as if fearful that that makeshift would come down on their worshipers.

A circle like a miniature race-track had been swept (or kicked) clean around the center table, and the nakedness of the wooden floor in this ring shaded off into the accumulated dust and filth which covered the rest of the place. A fat, jolly-looking old girl was puffing around the stove, now wiping the straggling hair from her forehead with the back of her hand, now feeling dubiously at the string which cut into her ample middle and held together the great awnings that did service as clothing, cutting her in two so that she looked like a happy meal-bag that had been tied in the middle instead of at the top.

Half a dozen children ran about, the happiness of never having to wash their ears evidently coming out in their play, for they were having a glorious time. Two of the smallest—babies two or three

years old—were in ecstasies of delight, wrestling with a little black pig under the dining-room table; another was engaged in teaching a mongrel puppy to pursue its own tail. Altogether, the picture certainly was that of a happy family, but hardly of a prosperous one.

When the horse finally appeared, it turned out to be a magnificent creature, and from the interior of the house a boy brought out a beautiful saddle, ornamented with silver—the one evidence of Angel's prosperity, but still hardly compensation for the squalor of his home. I made arrangements to try the horse the next Sunday, and wandered on.

If the wealthy Angel lived like this, in what kind of shack did my poor Salomon exist, who lived solely on the dollar and a half with which he was daily rewarded for his faithfulness to me? I found him in one of the company-built houses half-way up the hill. Its interior was almost identical with that of Angel's home! The only difference was that Salomon shared his castle with another family, and everything—children, wives, and dirt—was doubled. And the company houses were one-room shacks about fifteen feet square!

The attitude of big companies toward housing their men is very different in different localities. In the United States, the problem is difficult. If the company builds a model town, it can give the men

infinitely better facilities, nearer the work and in every way more convenient. But no matter with what altruism such steps are taken, the cry of paternalism goes up among the men, and one will find a large number who would rather live in shacks, miles from their jobs, and rented at exorbitant prices from individual landlords, than accept the advantages their employers offer, merely because they feel more independent paying their rent to some one other than the company. The question is a delicate one, and many solutions have been worked out and are being worked out. But in Mexico there is no such problem. The attitude of the larger companies is necessarily paternal; the people dealt with are children and must be looked after and guarded, to insure any production whatever.

There is, however, a wide variance in the attitude taken toward the so-called "elevation of the race." In southern Mexico no attempt is made to change the status of the peon laborer: he is taken for what he is. He is fed and given money to buy alcohol, and his shortcomings are sworn at but accepted. Over the line, to the north, in camps that employ nothing but Mexican labor, where a Mexican city is literally transplanted from its own soil to ours, systematic attempts are made to raise the standard of living. I was told that it takes just four years to

complete the Americanization of the Mexican—to teach him to bathe every day, to sleep in clean rooms with plenty of air, and to curb, in a measure, his ferocious appetite for spirits. Also it is an accepted fact that the results are highly satisfactory, and that increased output goes hand in hand with physical and mental improvement.

I had a great many arguments, at Monte, about these policies. The company more or less straddled them. They built the men houses, but houses such as Salomon lived in were sorry improvements on the native ones. They tried to teach safety-first and gave medical service, but paid little or no attention to the living-conditions of the so-called healthy. The first encounter with evidences of traditional influence and of Latin temperament seemed to discourage any further attempt. They built these houses, and because the Mexicans, accustomed all their lives to live in squalor, did nothing to improve them, they assumed that nothing more could be done. They put in baths, and because the Mexican had never had a bath and was n't particularly interested in experimental adventures of the sort, they called him a dirty pig and let it go at that. One can run altruism into the ground, and the attitude of the company at Monte may be well enough, and is certainly human; but once such an attitude is as-

sumed, one must take the consequences—and consequences are lowered production and irregularity of work.

How can any one expect men living in such houses—six, eight, ten souls sleeping in a little box of a room and breathing foul air through the night; eating heavy, highly seasoned native concoctions and drinking spirits that would make an American bootlegger blush—to compete with the miners on the other side of the line, living an infinitely cleaner life, with fresh air and good food and guarded by health departments and insurance officers? And yet it is expected, and when the results are poor, the operators unite in one great howl of condemnation and accuse the Mexican of being lazy, degenerate, and worthless. Make an American of him, or leave him to his happy indolence.

When I attempted to argue the matter with those who had the power to bring about a change, I was told quite seriously that a Mexican was a Mexican, and that nothing could adapt him to a foreign life. A few broad-minded men, confronted with statistics from Mexican camps in the United States, looked to the future and ventured that fifty years from now things might be different—but took no steps to make them so! Entirely aside from the return on the investment in welfare that increased efficiency would bring, there were things in that camp which were

appalling to the most casual humanitarian. Living in their own filth, horribly overcrowded, the people were easy victims to disease, which would sweep through the camps like wild-fire. During the summer months there was a continuous procession, on the road to the graveyard, of funerals, in which the little blue coffins of babies predominated. Congenital diseases were common to an unbelievable extent, and the hideous sores of the worst cases were all too evident on the naked bodies of the workmen one met underground. The resistance of the people was virtually nil; the simplest disorders snuffed out their lives like candles in a breeze. Their inability to withstand prolonged strain was the bane of the doctor's life.

I saw a man taken into the hospital, one day, with a bullet in his side, the result of an accident. The American surgeon in camp, a very able fellow, extracted it without much trouble, and the man came out of the anæsthetic in good form and gave every appearance of being cured. The doctor was rather proud of the job he had done. But two days later, for no apparent reason, the patient died. And the doctor told me the occurrence was a most common one: he would think he had conditions entirely under control, and that there was no chance of losing his patient, when suddenly the end would come. The flame of life was not strong enough; there were too

many generations behind these people who had lived as they were living. But with death all around him, in his work and in his home, in the midst of poverty and squalor, the Mexican continues to be one of the happiest of mortals.

The young secretary to the superintendent was a very serious student of Spanish and something of a lady-killer in his way, and exercised both his talents in the evenings, on excursions into the Mexican town. There were a number of girls from the larger Mexican cities, teaching school, and I used to go down with him and call on them in their houses. My companion and guide said that he enjoyed himself, but he was up in arms against the customs of the country. No unmarried girl could be out with a man after eighty-thirty, and he complained that whenever he became most interested, the fatal hour would leap up and catch him unawares, and his lady-love would murmur, "*Buenas noches*," and disappear.

Most of the younger men in camp had been to France during the war, but they evidently had imbibed little of the spirit of the family life of the Latins. To be unable to see a grown girl after eighty-thirty at night seemed to them utter rot and so ridiculous that few bothered to continue an acquaintance after being left at the door a few times. But one or two hardy souls, knowing more Spanish and having

lived in Mexico longer, persevered. They had a very simple formula for doing away with such absurdities. They called not on the daughter but on the father and mother, and spent a week or two gravely discussing religion and expounding their own righteousness. Then, with or without hypocrisy, having convinced those in authority that they could do no wrong, they casually met the daughter and took her for a walk, to talk to her for the good of her soul. And when righteousness is arguing with natural sin, temporal matters like eighty-thirty o'clock cannot be allowed to interfere.

Ordinarily affairs so managed appeared to work out very nicely, but one young chap had a terrible scare. Without quite enough preparatory bombardment, he took a pretty little school-mistress for a walk, and, coming back at ten-thirty instead of eight, was met by the father, who, his face wreathed in smiles, congratulated the boy on having won the daughter's heart and asked when the wedding would be. As the youngster had seen the girl only once before and his interest in her was really of a very platonic nature, the father's attitude was somewhat of a shock, and it took several days' work on the part of mediators to convince the old man that the boy had n't known it was so late, and, besides, was married in the States (a slight departure from the truth deemed necessary to guarantee the perma-

nency of the break). The one-night fiancé was completely cured, and never ventured into the town again after dark.

One important element in the life of a Mexican town is the position of John Chinaman. Barred alike in the republics to the north and south, the wanderers of his phlegmatic race have invaded virtually every part of Mexico. At Monte I found them engaged in many fields of activity. Along the little stream below camp, their minute, neatly irrigated vegetable gardens struck a peculiar note of order and freshness amid the untidiness of the Latin and the barrenness of the desert. The best shops, the cleanest and neatest, always upon investigation were discovered to have Chinese proprietors. Our only tailoring establishment was run by a family of Orientals, bending over worn-out sewing-machines and chattering in the seeming gibberish of their language. They even invaded the mine.

One of the foremen on the lower levels carried out a successful experiment to increase production by encouraging competition. He had two "raise men" working for him, one of Chinese descent, the other a pure Japanese, neither of whom, despite undoubted efficiency, had ever broken any records or shown evidences of killing themselves from overwork. The Chinaman was called "Johnny," the Japanese preserved his racial cognomen of "Kato."

Kato was under five feet, five inches; Johnny, I think, was not over the five-foot mark, but both were beautifully developed, and they knew their business. The enterprising foreman had two raises to start, not fifty feet apart, both to go one hundred feet up. He got the two men together and told them each was to have one of these, and that he would give a bonus of five pesos to the man who first "holed through" to the level above. Then he took Johnny aside and told him just what Kato thought about a Chinaman's chances to win the bonus, and added, from a rich imagination, some comments Kato had made about Johnny's personality, his ancestors, and his general ability as a miner. And when poor little Johnny was about to go on top and get his knife to avenge himself at once, the foreman got hold of Kato and told a similar story to the Japanese.

They were both "rarin' to go!" He gave them their machines and turned them loose. How the rock flew down that raise! From being tolerable friends, the two became the bitterest of enemies. The first twenty feet went beautifully, and then both struck a stratum of hard rock which defied human endeavor and dulled steel as if it were lead. The contestants complained, each in turn, that he had been given a raw deal. The boss had the engineer measure the heights and, finding them within a few inches of each other, offered to let the men change

workings. Reassured that no one was trying to handicap the race, they returned, and the foreman, relenting, got permission from the superintendent to assign an American instructor to help them.

The instructors are expert old American miners, brought down to teach the Mexicans new and better ways of drilling, and if a man will take their advice he can usually double his earning capacity. But when the American went down, a new factor entered the race to complicate it. He went in and told them both that he would help first one and then the other, spending alternate days in each raise. Johnny, the Chinaman, folded his hands and shook his head vigorously up and down, all smiles; the toughness of the rock had gotten him. But Kato, when approached, became violently angry. He had been insulted: if he could n't break that ground, no one could; he would take no aid, and if the American knew what was most wise, he would get out of his sight at once before he hit him on the head with a drill steel.

The result was that little Johnny—with a tough old veteran, somewhat provoked with the other's rebuff, at his side—broke three feet to Kato's two and reached the goal a week ahead of the independent Japanese. They never did settle the dispute (although Johnny got the five pesos). Kato felt, and probably will feel to his dying day, that his was

the moral victory, but the side betting in the office, which was heavy, was paid on the Chinaman, and it was he who broke the mine record for one hundred feet of vertical raising.

The Mexicans, on the whole, are not too enthusiastic about their permanent guests; in fact, in revolutions they are inclined to make short shrift of them and stimulate competition by killing off all the Chinamen and giving other merchants a new chance. But except in such crises the Chinese and the natives jibe fairly well; the foreigners learn the language easily and are looked upon as very satisfactory catches in the marriage market. Little wonder, for, whatever else he may do, the Oriental treats his wife with great consideration, and, exponents of cave-man policies to the contrary, I think the average woman would rather be comfortable, have good clothes to wear, and be treated with respect than to see her husband's earnings go into the pocket of the saloon-keeper and get her only dividend in a Saturday night's beating.

Drunkenness brings out every bad trait in the Mexican, and is the biggest factor to be considered in living with him. I am no prohibitionist, but the misery alcohol causes among these people makes one think. They have a taste for strong spirits which is almost a mania. When every man is so drunk one day in five that he cannot work the next, alcohol

becomes a force in every-day existence. As nearly as I could estimate, there was a murder in camp on an average of once in every ten days, and I think in ninety per cent of the cases one or both parties were drunk.

The Mexican officials have a very free-and-easy way of dealing with such offenders. I remember one brawl that took place at about five o'clock in the afternoon. We were just coming up from the office, when we were startled by the sound of a pistol-shot somewhere in the valley. Shooting is common at night and usually means only an exuberance of spirits, mental and distilled, but in the afternoon it is a little out of the ordinary. This time it was followed by a blood-curdling scream and a great deal of shouting. We stopped, of course, and saw several members of the police department rush out of the town hall and disappear up one of the gulches. Presently they came back, each dragging, half encouraging, half supporting, an unsteady figure, and surrounded by an excited mob. They got their prisoners into the jail, all right, the crowd dispersed, and we went down to find out what had happened. The jailer told us that it was nothing of any importance.

“These two idiots were a little excited over some trifle, and in sport began to flourish their weapons—nothing but a puny bit of a thirty-two revolver and

a measly six-inch pen-knife. Of course they had been drinking, but nothing would have come of it if an old miner had n't passed by and stepped between them. The combatants were, naturally, annoyed, and one shot the miner with the toy pistol while the other stuck the knife into his back. They are both sorry they were so thoughtless, but the man is dead! It is a nuisance, but I had to lock them both up!"

It certainly was a nuisance, because the jail was already full, and a full jail was a tremendous drag on what little graft passed through the jailer's hands. It evidently preyed upon the poor official's mind, as the prisoners would in all probability remain there six or eight months before it would be auspicious to try them. It must have been a continual strain on the man, because it brought a weary look into his face, and as the weeks went by he became more and more absent-minded. At last it came to such a pass that leaving for home one evening, engrossed in thoughts of the dance to be given that night, where with a little wine he could get his mind off his work for a while, he quite forgot to lock the jail door after him. And it was a good four hours before the omission came to him.

"Four hours!" He must have shrugged his shoulders. "What a pity, all the prisoners will be gone! But how fortunate that I forgot, also, to order food for them on the morrow! Well, nothing

can be done about it; enter it in the book, 'Escaped,' and say no more about the matter!"

But this is not nearly so flagrant a miscarriage of justice as it seems. It works out very well: the State is saved much expense, and the offenders will never come back: return engagements with revengeful relatives of the deceased are too easily arranged!

Occurrences like the foregoing annoyed the Americans intensely, but they appeared to me to be little worse than the workings of the unwritten law over the border. In Arizona, I saw one very dramatic murder, with my own eyes. The background to the affair, I learned later, was rather peculiar. One miner had been paying considerable attention to another's wife. The aggrieved man took a very sensible attitude and packed up his belongings and left camp. He had been working in another camp, several hundred miles away, for only a week when the other man showed up. The husband thought it over and again bundled his family on to new fields. The other point of the triangle followed.

The thing had gone on, I was told, for several years, the same drama being enacted in nearly every camp in the Union. When the curtain went up for the tragedy, the exponent of virtue had been in Arizona several months before the other man appeared. When he did, he got a job underground and was put on the same shift that I was then with. At the time

no one knew about the affair or paid any attention to the new miner; miners are pretty silent about their own business.

The end came a little after seven on an October morning. Our shift had just changed into their "digging clothes" and were sitting in the "drying house" or on the ground before it. I had changed, too, and was leaning against the doorway of the house, fooling with my lamp. The new man also was in his underground clothes, standing idly in the center of a little plateau before the tunnel which opened into the mine. Suddenly I saw a man—a stranger to me—come up the steps to the house and cross slowly over to the miner. He was dressed in street clothes, but wore no coat, and although he walked calmly enough, there was something menacing in his bearing. He went straight up to the miner and said very distinctly:

"Stand right still a minute, you——!"

Then, before any one could move, he reached into his shirt, pulled out a long black lugger revolver and shot the man before him through the temple. The murdered man crumpled up and fell at the other's feet. Hypnotized, no one moved. The murderer put the gun back into his shirt and walked by me into the "dry," where half a hundred men were changing. At the door he stopped and announced in a loud voice:

“If yer want to see a good man, who ’ll stay good now, I ’ve got one here for yer!”

Then he strode out and down the steps and across to the police station which stood opposite the mine, and gave himself up.

And yet this man got off scot-free. His wife’s testimony and a few letters were all that were needed. The father of the murdered boy (for he was only twenty-one or twenty-two) came to camp from Texas to testify for the killer, believing his son to have received his due. Now, all this may have all been perfectly legitimate in the light of a higher justice, but it establishes a dangerous precedent because it indicates that all a man need do to be acquitted of murder is to hire a lawyer and bring a woman into the case. And this murderer is a free and respected citizen, whereas the Mexican offender will be a fugitive the rest of his life, which is n’t apt to be a long one.

Sensational crime, however, is not the principal effect of the serious drinking propensities of the natives. The entire social system makes allowances for it. Take the method of paying men, which I mentioned before. An arrangement for the advance of a certain amount each day takes for granted that when the balance is paid it will do the family exchequer no good. And it certainly does not! The wives of the miners get their daily credit at the

store and hasten to turn it into food and clothing before their easy-going husbands come up from underground and fall victims to overpowering thirst.

The days on which the balances are paid are eventful. Different groups of men are paid on different days, or life in the town would be one great drinking-contest; perhaps even the company fears a temporary drought from the strain such a day would put on the *cantinas*. There is a typical procedure.

The miner draws his pay in gold and silver, and sets out for the nearest *cantina*. Creditors must catch him in the few hundred feet he has to traverse, or all is lost for another week. At his favorite *cantina* he sets up court, both hands full of clinking coins. After a few drinks, every miner passing the open door (Mexican saloons have n't acquired the swinging door as yet) is asked in to join the merry-making. When half a dozen drinks have gone down the well-worn path, a strange local custom comes into effect. The reveler hires a band.

The band itself is an oddity. It usually consists of a violin, a guitar, and a bass fiddle. It knows three tunes; if it learned and played any others, it would be boycotted. The miner collects his band and contracts for it by the hour. Its duty then is to follow its patron, wherever he may roam, up hill and down, to serenade in turn his numerous friends and relatives, and to keep him in a good humor. It

never stops playing—each one of the three tunes over and over again. The most extraordinary phenomenon is the man who plays the bass fiddle; he actually carries it, caught between his chin and his shoulder, walks with it, climbs mountains with it, and plays it at the same time. On important occasions a small boy carries the heel of it, while the musician, grasping the stem, saws merrily away.

As long as the miner's money holds out, this band tags along behind the man, usually receiving a bonus of strong liquor every so often. No one ever tires of the three tunes, and almost any morning, walking down to work at six-thirty, I used to hear the old familiar melodies floating up from the valley, still making the rounds. When a miner is very rich, the band will play forty-eight hours with hardly any intermission. I have always wanted to promote a non-stop dancing and playing contest wherein some of our American notoriety-seekers might meet their match in these serious professional musicians.

They certainly lend color to the life of the place, these peripatetic minstrels, for they are natural musicians and their pieces weird compositions in the minor which are fascinating to the foreigner. The same group of tunes is used indiscriminately for all occasions — midnight serenading, weddings, and funerals.

The funerals are great events. I remember the

first one I witnessed. I wrote the following note about it in my diary:

Saw them carrying a coffin up the hill to-day. Stood on Fifth Avenue, as they call the parade in front of the office, and looked right down into it, as it was open. It was robin's-egg blue, which seems to be the color now in vogue; looked very small but had a full-grown Mexican in it. It was preceded by the orchestra with that ridiculous little ape sawing at the bass viol he carried screwed under his chin, playing the same tune I heard last night at the dance. Eight men were carrying the coffin on their shoulders, walking lock-step, and another followed, balancing the lid on his head. There were a few mourners, all men, behind, looking very sour, for the man was murdered two days ago, a passer-by told me. The wind was blowing and I could n't be sure there was any one in the thing at first, because he was set in a mass of wavy tissue paper which fluttered all about; but finally this blew aside and there he lay in a pink-and-white striped shirt. He was having a rough ride of it, too, for the trail up is no boulevard. They turned off half-way up and started circling around the hill below the saloons. I stood and watched them for some time.

Before that funeral reached its destination, it degenerated into a riot, but I did not learn the fact until later. The Mexican funeral is the only real rival of the famous Irish wake, and every one in this particular party was a little the worse for drink, when a relative of the murderer was sighted. The "pall-bearers" set the coffin down, deserted on the rough side of the mountain, and gave chase, but the enemy was too swift for them, so there was nothing to do but have another drink and finish the business of burying their friend.

CHAPTER VII

THE AMERICAN COLONY ON THE HILL

THE cast of characters in that drama known as the "American Colony at Monte" was the roll of American officials in the mine. There were the superintendent, whom we have already met, his assistant, the heads of the mechanical, electrical, and sundry-supplies departments, and, behind these principals, the chorus of foremen, engineers, and clerks. To most of the "*jefes*," as the bosses are called, one may add "and wife." The casting of these parts was the problem of a general manager, who, fortunately, did not have to stay and see the show but derived his information, as to the success of his choices, from the box-office receipts, cost-sheets being sent daily, weekly, and monthly for his inspection. His main difficulty lay not in re-casting but in replacing members of the company who became "fed up" with the long run of the play.

For whether the performers thought the scenery cheap, the plot poor, or their fellow-actors indifferent, the personnel of the theater was continually changing. They certainly could not complain of

their Mexican house, because that was always full. But as there were no contracts, their runs varied from one night up. In the first two months after I left camp, my former room-mate wrote me, there were two new chief electricians, a new chief engineer, three new doctors, and a fifty-percent turnover in the department I had been in. During my first three months at Monte, over a dozen jobs changed hands. And all this in a camp where there were only some thirty-five American men in all!

Such prodigious evidences of unrest seemed to me, at first, almost incredible. When I was told of them, I felt like the farmer who for the first time saw a giraffe and after a prolonged study of the beast solemnly declared, "There ain't no sech animal!" I found it hard to believe that life in a mining-camp could be better-ordered or pleasanter than the life at Monte. True, the setting was a bit rough, but there was more than compensation for this in its wild beauty. The stage scenery, to prolong the simile, gave every appearance of being adequate; married men were given—no, rented—what seemed to be attractive enough little houses lining the fashionable thoroughfare up the hill known as "Pershing Drive," each house with its minute irrigated garden in front, where the almost-green grass and peach- and fig-trees were neatly fenced off from the roving burro; single men lived in a big dormitory

at the top of the hill, ate at a common mess, and slept on a broad veranda which encircled the building.

Regarding the part each actor played, I have already suggested the advantages of working in a foreign country, far from authoritative fingers which might dabble in one's pie; and as for the social life, it seemed impossible that a little group as isolated as we were should not make up for lack in numbers by a freedom and an intimacy and a gayety which would be an intense relief after the society of the East. I thought of Richard Harding Davis's "Exiles" and of a host of romances of the great broad West, and resolved that no narrowness of Eastern prejudice should keep me from being one of the group.

I admit that I had much to learn. One need only talk with a few individuals and make one or two calls, to sense the power of a Four Hundred at Monte that would have delighted old Ward McAllister. A social system in a camp with no more than sixty souls!

"I know I 'm foolish," one girl told me, "but my husband does all *his* work, and *he* gets ten dollars a month more!" and the invariable end to such complaints, "But of course we 're here only for a short time: this job is just a sort of filler, you know!"

Why? I wondered. They were all nice people.

The men had undoubted opportunities, and living was cheap enough, at least by my standards.

Another of the engineers, a young chap from Missouri who had worked all through South America, told me his budget for living-expenses. He had a wife and a boy about eight years old. Their house cost them twenty dollars a month; they had a Mexican girl to help out, and every modern convenience included in a realtor's pæan of praise—electric lights, hot and cold water, and two minutes' run (down-hill) to work. In the morning the vegetable man, a withered old Chinaman, came along with a string of burros loaded with fresh vegetables, and the wife stood at her gate and selected what she wished, and argued with the huckster, in the six or eight Spanish phrases she had picked up. She had only a hundred yards to walk to the meat market, where a quarter would buy enough steak for a Sunday dinner. And for all this, the young man told me, he and his wife allowed just one hundred dollars a month. Moreover, as it was impossible to give theater parties and luncheons at "Pierre's," they could entertain as elaborately as any one else in camp, with no more expense than the extra food and perhaps a bridge prize. The company employed a school-teacher, an American girl about whom I shall have more to say later, to teach the dozen or more children, and there was a dance at the dormitory

every other Saturday. What more could an ordinary individual want? All this, set to an exotic background, with not even prohibition to darken sunny skies!

The rub, I discovered, came mainly with the women. The men had always the common basis of their occupation. Wherever they came from, New York or Arizona, they were there to get copper out of the ground, to stand side by side, and to acquire that understanding which comes from having worked beside a man through good luck and bad. But the women, gathered together from all over the United States, imbued with that characteristic American democratic desire to attain social prominence, were a different story. The majority came from Main Street towns (indeed, Sinclair Lewis would have been delighted with most of them), where they had or had not amounted to much socially. But when they journeyed afar into a foreign land, they all found an embryo society of which they as well as any one else might be the leader. Past was easy to talk of and hard to prove. At once their early lives became intensely rosy; there was not the slightest doubt that they were all used to much better things, much more exclusive friends, and in general an entirely different (and higher) rung of the social ladder. They all wanted more than anything else to

be back in that rarefied air they had left, and were obviously putting up with the others at Monte and making the best of a bad deal.

With one or two exceptions, none of the women spoke even tolerable Spanish, or cared to. They were strongly convinced of the inferiority of the Mexicans, their chief criticisms of the natives being that they were clumsy in waiting on table and did not know how to make beds.

There was some reason in the latter criticism. I remember one woman who tried to break in a "green" little girl of fourteen or fifteen. The child had never seen more bed-clothes than a single blanket, and could not understand the use of sheets. First she took them off the bed, carefully folded them up, and put them away. To her they were priceless pieces of material for ball dresses, which would be defiled by contact with the blankets. When finally persuaded that they must be sacrificed, she spread one out on top of the blankets and hung one over the end of the bed, believing them to be for decorative purposes. And even after the correct procedure was demonstrated in detail by an exasperated mistress, for weeks no one could foretell just where the sheets would turn up; for, once convinced of the idiocy of the Americans in wasting good linen, she was sure that it could n't make much

difference in what part of the bed the sheets were put, as long as the place was, from her point of view, thoroughly inappropriate.

There were, in the rough, three social sets on the hill: those who never gave any parties, and associated with the rest of the camp only at the dances; those who were what the society papers call the "active leaders," whose one ambition was something original for their next party; and that reactionary element whose invitations meant something and whose prominence was based on substantial differences in pay-roll figures. I really never found out what the first were like, for they were not very approachable, but I have an idea they were the best of the lot. Of course I went to every party to which I was asked.

I had never before realized that one must be exceedingly intimate or truly cosmopolitan to be informal. One Wednesday afternoon, after I had been in camp for about a month, one of my bosses drew me aside, with an air of having weighty matters to impart. I wondered, vaguely, just what particular mistake I had made that day, and was a bit apprehensive, but it turned out that he was only inviting me to dinner on Saturday, before the dance.

"Very informal, you know, just a tamale feed with the folks. At seven. Fine! we 'll be awfully glad to see you!"

The last remark sounded odd, because I saw them both every day of the week.

Saturday came in due time, as Saturdays will despite the pessimism of the middle of the week, and as the affair was "very informal" and "with the folks," I didn't even bother to change out of my office clothes. I trotted down the hill about five minutes late (I'm always late for everything) and knocked at the door. My chief swung it open at once, staggering me by his suddenness and the splendor of his attire. For he was dressed in a sharply pressed business suit, with a stiff collar and silver tie, and his handkerchief was just the correct half-inch of white above his breast pocket. His wife, a charming person, was behind him in a pseudo evening dress, very new and shiny.

"I think you've met my wife." I certainly had—three times a day, going up and down from the office. "And Mr. Neal?" I met Mr. Neal, having chatted with him only a dozen times in the *tienda*. We then sat down in a formal circle and I noticed that Mr. Neal also was beautifully gotten up. The conversational stand-by west of the Mississippi was at once brought into play. I was asked how I liked the Great West.

But I managed to withstand the fire until the ship, and my appetite, were saved by the appearance, through some curtains at the other end of the room,

of a shy, dark-skinned girl in misfitting calico, who muttered something about "Din-serve," and disappeared. We trooped in, and presently I found myself seated at the most resplendent table I have ever seen classified as informal. There was a glistening new table-cloth, all a-sparkle with silver (four forks, two knives, and two spoons apiece), and illuminated with four tall candles set in silver candlesticks. It was a very pretty board, but a little overawing.

The conversation, however, maintained the tone. There were golf and swimming, set in the fashionable coast resorts of the States, a good deal of the old reliable weather (although in Monte the weather never changed), and, of course, an undertow of solicitation for my attitude toward this newest of civilizations. It seemed to me a trifle like "fishing," but perhaps I was prejudiced, because I had wanted to know my superior's family and what they were really like, and I felt that I could get a much more genuine article in the way of sophisticated small talk from reading "Vanity Fair"—or so the advertisements told me.

Bear in mind the desert about this oasis; do not forget that I was dining with people whom I worked with and saw every day of my life, and that there were only a few of us, isolated, with over a hundred miles of nothing between us and even a border town. The little Mexican maid served grape-fruit on ice,

soup in gilt-edged plates, and tamales, unwrapped from their corn husks and with special sauce, to be eaten primly with the correct fork (ascertained by careful observation of my hostess, as the etiquette of eating tamales was not included in my early training). There also were salad and dessert, each course punctuated with apologies for the unintelligence of the servant who crept timidly in and out, always on the verge of spilling something. By the time dinner was over—a good hour—the beer which accompanied it had improved the situation, but the enjoyment of my after-dinner cigar was a little marred by a serious discussion of the merits of “doubling one.”

I was astonished to find that subsequent dinners were not materially different from this one. The dances were much more enjoyable. There were two natural musicians among the clerks in the mine office: one played the piano (the transportation of a piano to this mountain-top must have been a feat in itself) and the other the saxophone. The night foreman was an expert with the traps, and had every other Saturday off in which to help the cause. The whole camp was there and I met them in their entirety, enjoying the opportunity to dress up and expounding the theory that it's never too late to dance. The affairs were pleasant, even if one had to contract for a partner seven dances ahead.

I could never understand this leaning toward the

formal in Monte, and was continually making social blunders, such as not dressing for my first dinner. At bridge parties I was even worse form, for they too were rites in themselves. The guests all came on time and stood in a sort of herd until the busy hostess started the fun of the evening with some delightful trick about finding places. One might be given a line of poetry on a card and told to search for the rhyming line, which would be at one's place, or discover a picture (cut from a "Saturday Evening Post" advertisement) which suggested a title to be found on one of the tables. All the conventional remarks about being stupid were then made. With only my commonplace name, which I've known most of my life, to find, I can usually be in my place at a formal dinner after thirty-two laps around the table (if not deceived by some other guest's sitting in my chair), but with a puzzle to solve as well, there is only one course for me to pursue, which is to slink off into a corner and wait until the rest of the guests are seated.

And the ceremonious game which followed all this was played in silence, with the desert night outside, strolling care-free minstrels wandering through the camp below, and the ceaseless thunder of the shops echoing in the hills as the night shift carried on the battle with the earth.



El Dormitorio: THE BACHELOR'S QUARTERS, AND TYPICAL AMERICAN COMPANY HOUSES
Above is the Moving Tennis Court

But bridge at its worst was a mild form of torture instituted by a kindly god to prepare suffering humanity for the burden of Mah Jong, which succeeded it in popularity. For months the clouds gathered as the matrons of the colony read, in letters from relatives in the States and in the papers, of the growing vogue of the Chinese game, until at last the tension in the heavens became too great: all the world was playing Mah Jong; Monte must!

I might have loved Mah Jong, as I really love good bridge, but it soon became a religious ceremony, and religious ceremonies, at their best, are poor sport. First there was the player who always upset his wall in the building. Roars of laughter. Then the idiot who remarked that unless a certain part of the wall was set aside, the moon would fall into the sea. He (or she) was chided for believing such foolishness. Then began the serious business of the game, which was inventing new names for the pieces. Circles were called "cart-wheels"; characters had to be "crackers"; bamboos, "bean-poles," and the white dragon "a cake of soap," familiarly known as "Ivory." Each player adopted one of these little witticisms and repeated it not under a hundred times an evening. It got to be the most restful game imaginable, for, once the rite was mastered, the entire play might be carried on

by the nerve centers located somewhere in the lower spine. My own personal handicap was that when operating from this base I invariably fell asleep.

Games are peculiar indications of mass psychology. The social life of Monte was restricted to the five or six hours that remained after the day's work was done; that three or four of these hours should be devoted to such artificial amusements was astonishing. I have read of Englishmen who go out into the wilderness and, living there, dress for dinner, play cards in the evening, and build golf-courses on Sunday. The point to remember, however, is that these men were accustomed to do these things before they left civilization and that they are trying, by means of preserving their customs and games, to keep themselves in touch with the lives they have left. The American exiles, on the other hand, were simulating something they never knew. They did not play Mah Jong and bridge because they had learned, in their youth, to love them, but because they suffered from an inferiority complex which they were endeavoring to dispel by imitating people who played these games. The effect was peculiarly insincere, and they must have felt it, for they entrenched themselves behind the barriers of formality on every possible occasion.

My only really exciting evening of Mah Jong was not quite orthodox. One evening, during a dance,

we got up a sporting foursome which consisted of two old-time foremen, a young clerk who had once been a professional dancer, and myself. We neglected the accepted Mah Jong conversation, and, lacking this inspiration, were losing interest, when the clerk, shaking the dice to decide who should have the honor of being East Wind (and have all walls move up to his), was suddenly fascinated by the realization of what he was doing. The clicking of the little ivories struck a forgotten chord in his memory, and his eyes lit up. If anything, the rest of us were ahead of him in reading his thoughts. With one accord we rose from the table and trooped into the dance-hall.

At one end of the long room stood a billiard-table around which the stag line was grouped. The clerk, still shaking the dice meditatively, made his way straight to this spot and, clearing a space, whispered the magic formula, "One quarter open, boys!" The stag line turned its back to the room and crowded closer. Round and round the dice swept, until silver dollars alone proclaimed a difference of opinion as to Fate's patronage of the man who held the magic symbols. When the music stopped, half the men dancing deserted their wives and joined the game. The reactionary other half kept up bravely, but the crowning blow came when the musicians themselves were no longer able to resist the

call. Mah Jong had turned and bitten the hands that fed it!

Public opinion at Monte was very much against gambling in mixed company, as it was against any of the acknowledged petty vices in women. As long as the outposts of civilization live up to the standards of morality that Monte held to, the world is safe. I suppose that when the emperors of Rome were holding their Bacchic revels in the capital, the legionaries in Gaul were strong in protest against their wives' inaugurating a new style of bare shoulders. At Monte, for a woman to smoke, even in private, was a sacrilege; she might drink, but beer or claret only. Flirtation was of the obvious kind: "You might hold my hand if my husband were n't looking!" (in a loud voice).

On the border I heard one woman openly boasting that she had told her daughter, who had made an amateur sensation by contemplating a theatrical career, that if she went on the stage, her sisters would not be able to speak to her! And yet one of this woman's best friends, painted in a crude imitation of a circus clown, drank boot-leg gin in the men's locker-room at the country-club dances, completely deceiving her own daughter—who was doing the same thing in a car parked outside! But Monte—thank Heaven!—was behind the times and had not mastered such good American hypocrisy.

CHAPTER VIII

NIGHT LIFE

WHILE I had gone in search of the home life of the Mexican by day and had had that of the American thrust upon me, I had yet to discover just what my workmen did with their evenings, beyond hiring a band and destroying their neighbors' sleep. They couldn't all have bands,—there weren't enough to go around,—but the after effects of too-gay evenings were universal, and I could hardly accuse the race of toping alone at home. There must be more festive places that one does not hear of, I thought to myself, and for a time let it go at that.

One night, however, after two months' residence in camp had given me the right to call myself an old-timer, we were sitting in the back room of Pete's *cantina* when a trip into the forbidden territory of Monte was proposed. I had thought that "graveyard shifts" in the mine were as near night life in the under-world as I should get, but there were rumors of a district known as the "Alps," and when a visit to it was suggested, I accepted the

chance to investigate. There were three of us—a little chap named Van Allen who worked in the store and spoke excellent Spanish, one of the general-office men, who spoke none at all, and I. None of us had ever made the trip, so we rapped on the table and summoned Pete to our assistance.

Pete, the most prosperous saloon-keeper in camp, was a round globule of a man with the smallest beads for eyes and a strong Castilian lisp in his speech. We explained to him our desire for adventure, and, all of us being excellent customers, he consented to act as our guide himself. He explained that the district we were about to visit was a "closed area" after ten o'clock, and as that hour was almost upon us we set out at once.

It was a bright moonlit night, and as we wound down into the valley Pete pointed out our objective. It certainly belied its reputation in its location, for the buildings he indicated were silhouetted against the sky-line on the very top of the peak on the other side of the town from the American colony. I gathered from later observation that it was put above the rest of the town to facilitate one's return after a visit, for it is obviously easier to fall down-hill than up.

As we got farther and farther away from the colony, stumbling and catching ourselves in our descent into the valley, the feeling of adventure

became stronger and stronger. We passed many figures, heavily muffled, although the night was not cold, and to each gave a chorus of salutation: "*Buenas noches, señor!*" Failure to extend this greeting puts one already three quarters of the way into trouble after dark. At length we crossed the gulch and began the ascent of the other mountain-side. Half-way up, the winding street came abruptly out into a typical Mexican graveyard, the graves heavily coated with cement and above the ground, lighting up weirdly in the moonlight. It was a final touch of eeriness, for we had just entered it when the strains of muffled music from the settlement came floating down to us on the night air.

The aspect of the houses above was mysterious in itself: long adobe buildings without windows; little gleams of light coming from the cracks around the single door of each, and the sound of music and merrymaking within. Pete put his finger to his lips and led us around to a small door in the rear of one house and knocked very lightly the correct three times. The portal at once opened an inch or two, and a hurried whispering ensued. Evidently the guardian was satisfied with our references, for he pulled the door half open and we slid through after Pete.

What a scene! A long hall, perhaps fifty feet

by twenty, with bare adobe walls and a rough board floor, gaping cracks showing between the planks. Across one end the great mahogany bar, by the side of which we had entered, and in the far corner the orchestra, in bright silk shirts and slouch hats, sawing away at their stringed instruments. In front of shelves bright with bottles, and behind the bar, three bar-tenders in shirt-sleeves and open vests, and seated on the bar, banging their heels, half a dozen laughing girls with bare shoulders, in skirts of tinsel that came to their knees and bright-colored cotton stockings. Before them, a crowd of miners, in muddy "digging clothes" and great sombreros, brandished tall steins of beer and drank to the women amid much clinking of glasses. Out on the floor a handful of couples danced wildly, with short, bobbing motions, the man and the girl tightly interwoven. The sides of the hall were lined with benches, all crowded with men who beat time with their feet and shouted encouragement or approval to the dancers. The whole scene was lighted by flickering oil-lamps, set high in iron brackets on the wall, and had the air of a perfect "set" for a motion picture of the days of forty-nine.

A few men eyed us as we entered, but shrugged their shoulders and kept a hostile distance, so we did the most logical thing and lined up at the bar and ordered a drink. All three bar-tenders at once

got into action drawing beer, and before we knew it it became evident that we had "set them up for the house"! This proved a lucky turn, for, although through no fault of ours, we had done exactly what was expected of us; our health was drunk with a shout and we were accepted as "regular."

We had come just in time, for hardly had we emptied our glasses when the two doors of the place were locked and bolted with a mighty clanging of iron, and the portcullis was down for the evening. The excitement within, however, went on unabated, and I began to take stock of it. There were, in all, perhaps a score of girls, all of the dark Spanish type except one wisp of a child whose high cheekbones and stern expression told of a predominance of Indian blood. Most of them were rather pretty, though horribly over-made-up, but the majority verged on fatness. All were drinking beer, as fast as they could get any one to buy them the drinks, and at least appeared to be having the time of their lives, shouting and singing and flirting with much rolling of their great dark eyes.

I was leaning against the bar, smoking a cigarette, and admiring the genuineness of the spectacle,—which was of a kind I had thought ceased to exist with the passing of the gold rushes,—when one of the girls, who looked no more than a pretty child who had gotten hold of her mother's make-up box

and played with it, came over to me and vaulted lightly to the bar at my side. She took off my hat (which it had seemed etiquette to leave on), mussed my hair playfully, and demanded a drink. I stood by, not knowing exactly what was expected, while she drank the beer I ordered for her, and my companions roared with laughter. I gathered from her conversation (why is it one can understand a foreign language spoken by a girl more easily than by a man?) that she wanted to dance, and before I could adequately remonstrate she leaped down and led me through the crowd to the open space before the orchestra.

They were a highly accomplished lot, those musicians, playing entirely by ear, in a peculiar time that was n't quite a tango nor yet a "rag," filled with minor harmonies. The air of the thing they were playing seemed strangely familiar, and yet persisted in eluding me until at last I caught a bar and recognized "On the Beach at Waikiki"! They had heard it played, probably years before, and had memorized the melody and given it their own interpretation.

I anticipated a good deal of trouble with this dancing business, because what little style I had was not that of the dancers before me, and my cap-tress came about up to the third button on my vest. I did n't like it at all, especially as the boys with me

were anything but reserved in demonstrating their appreciation. However, as retreat was impossible, I struck out.

But just here something happened which turned the attention of the crowd from my partner and me and concluded my evening. One of the biggest and most brazen of the women had been standing aloof from the crowd, off in one corner, watching with ferocious intensity a little affair that was going on by the bar. The Indian girl was talking with a young cow-boy in woolly chaps and shirt open at the bosom. They had evidently just met, but were becoming more and more interested in each other, and as their conversation warmed, the dark clouds gathered on the lone woman's face. I had noticed her before we began to dance, but had forgotten all about her, when suddenly there was a scream from the bar. The big Mexican had thrown herself between the boy and the girl,—just as their lips were about to meet, I believe,—and was tearing at the girl's hair.

No one offered to interfere, and the crowd around them gave way in silence. It was a brutal procedure. The big woman grasped the straight hair of the other in her left hand and, holding the girl at arm's length, flailed her with her right in a most masculine way. The girl shrieked and tore at the hand woven in her hair, but was dragged across the room, the

fist of the fury crashing with lightning rapidity into her face and hammering at her breast. The proprietor of the place, evidently used to such occurrences, shot across the floor and unbarred one of the doors, toward which the Mexican was dragging her victim. She seemed to know exactly what she was doing, despite her towering rage. Five feet from the portal she flung the girl from her, the poor thing bleeding at the mouth and almost insensible. The girl fell in the doorway, gleaming blood, a scarlet pattern on her colorless cheek. Before she could drag herself across the threshold, the Amazon had kicked her violently half a dozen times. Instantly the proprietor slammed the door and with perfect nonchalance shoved the passionate victor back and motioned the orchestra to begin again.

The cause of this disturbance, the little cow-boy, had been lounging sulkily by the bar during the battle, and the woman now turned back to him. With an angry word or two, she caught him by the waist and whirled him out on the floor, to dance. Three or four couples followed them, and the episode was over, but it took the taste for gayety away from me. I gave my "dancing fool" a coin with which to buy herself another drink and made for the back door. Outside, my companions joined me, both a little sickened by such an exhibition of brutality. We were quite ready to call it an evening.

The moon was just setting, and all Monte lay spread out below us, the twinkling lamps of the houses looking like the riding lights of a great fleet of boats in some harbor beneath. While my companions went on ahead, I stopped to gaze at the beauty of it, forgetting the inadvisability of remaining alone in the place at night. When at last I started after them I was reminded of it quite forcibly, for I had not gone a dozen paces before I was halted by a dark figure which sprang up before me, materializing, as it were, from nothing. I murmured a salutation and was about to pass on, when I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder which turned me about until I looked into the muzzle of a revolver.

It happened so exactly as it would have in a story-book that I didn't take it quite seriously; every one has looked down the muzzles of revolvers since he could first read of adventure. The man behind this particular gun—for I saw that he was alone—had his hat pulled far down over his eyes and, with his free hand, he held his blanket-like cape drawn up across his mouth. He did not speak a word, but I gathered his intentions. I realized, at last, that he meant business.

Many men, including myself, have had theories as to what they would do in such circumstances, but I have a feeling that most of them would do as I

did. I took my change purse from my pocket and turned it over to him, hoping he would investigate no farther. My motion saved me, for when I held out the money he let drop his cape from his face to reach for it and I saw before me none other than my old friend, Angel Solis! At the same time he recognized me, and, with a grunt of surprise, pulled his hand back. He made a stab at getting control of the situation, stammering, "What can you expect, señor, with a great hungry family to feed?" And then, seeing that this did not seem to move me: "Ten thousand pardons that it should have been you; we will have no more of this," putting his gun back in a holster at his side; "but come and drink with me!"

Considering where we still were, I thought it a little injudicious to refuse, and so my late captor and I went down the hill, arm in arm, while he apologized again and again for his carelessness in not recognizing me. I am afraid he was under the influence of alcohol that night, because the next day, in the mine, he was most ashamed and for a whole week accomplished a prodigious amount of work.

The excitements of night life proved by far the most engaging side of Monte; for though I never again visited the "little house across the way," I had yet to experience my first street fair.

We were discussing the phases of civilization, one

evening, when I propounded the theory to Don Stewart that one of the chief evidences of culture was the development of complicated systems for the dispensation of charity, and a resultant hypocrisy in giving great balls and fairs, ostensibly to raise money, but actually to curb the growing ennui of an effete society.

“If that is the case,” he replied, “we are living in a most enlightened community. I’d take you down to one of the charity bazaars in the valley to prove it, if it weren’t worth your life to get back without leaving half a month’s salary behind.”

“We go, then,” said I, “because if any one in the world is hardened to the seductive solicitations of young beauties campaigning for a charity they know nothing about and care far less, then I am he! You don’t realize I’ve weathered a dozen winters in New York!”

Looking back, I think Don was rather mean about it: he made me back my opinion by betting him ten dollars that I could take as many pesos in my pocket and come back to camp with some part of the ten still in my possession. However, I was very confident, and the next Saturday evening my Scotch friend and I set out to make the test.

The fair-ground was the little concrete plaza—a very gay sight as we made our way down. All about the circle stood tiny booths draped with cheese-cloth

and decorated in gaudy colors. From the top of each booth strings of electric lights ran up to the pinnacle of the band stand in the center, like spokes of a brightly colored wheel. A lively orchestra was playing, and the crowd, which was dense, was dancing on the concrete about it. The Mexicans have a peculiar custom at their dances. The music never stops, and the couples dance several times around, then, tiring, continue to circle about the band, walking arm in arm. When they feel like dancing again, they are still on the floor and have but to fall into each other's arms and go waltzing off. The result is that at a dance half the couples are tripping the light fantastic toe while the other half, side by side with them, are walking solemnly around as if they were on parade or at a funeral. No one ever sits down except in the stag line.

At the first glance, my bet seemed safe enough: there was no admittance charge, and as the booths displayed only tamales and *enchiladas* and considerably used articles of clothing, I felt I could easily resist the wiles of the hawkers, although they were almost as efficient as the genuine article at Coney Island. Besides, I was highly entertained by the gayety of it all; there is no crowd in the world that can enjoy itself as thoroughly as a Latin crowd, care-free and pleasure bent. I voiced my confidence to my companion, but he only smiled.



THE DIVIDING LINE

The path before the offices which separates the Mexican town below from the American Colony above



“THE AMERICAN CLUB”

My Waterloo was not long in coming, for we had hardly stepped into the circle when we were beset. A rather attractive girl in a short black skirt, riding-boots that came to her knees, and a silk shirt open at the neck, suddenly stepped out in front of us. She had two cartridge-belts crossed over her hips, a big forty-five revolver suspended from each, and she stood square in our path with her feet apart and her delicate fingers playing with the butts of the weapons.

"Venga con migo, señor!" ("Come with me, sir!") She frowned severely. I didn't quite understand, but Don looked very much worried, and told me I had been arrested. The girl led the way across the circle and drew me up before one of the booths, in which sat an old man with a white beard, who held a little hammer in one hand. There was a rapid exchange of remarks between him and the girl, and he finally announced: "Two pesos, señor, for disturbing the peace!"

"But what, in Heaven's name, have I done? Why, you can't ar—"

"Another peso, señor, for contempt of court. You would, perhaps, prefer the jail?" I paid him the three pesos in a hurry, and the fair policewoman, spying a new victim, dashed off, saying:

"You may dance with me when I have arrested this man!"

Don then played a contemptible trick: he disappeared, behind my back, into the crowd and left me without a friend, in what I was beginning to suspect was a den of thieves. Well, I had been at the fair and still had seven pesos left, so, there having been no time limit specified, I waived the chances of dancing with the guardian of the law, and started to go.

As I turned about, one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen came running up to me and grasped me by the arm. I had it on the tip of my tongue to shout, "I want nothing, thank you!" very firmly, but she gave me no chance; she hurried me one side and stood on tiptoe to whisper in my ear. Unfortunately, I did not understand her at first, but she stamped her foot and repeated the speech, hissing it for emphasis. At last I gathered the missing words and realized that the girl had done nothing less than ask me to marry her! I demanded of her if that was what she meant.

"Sí, señor, sí!" with the most adoringly supplicating look in her eyes.

"No!" I growled, somewhat at a loss, "I can't marry you—I have n't time!"

"Ah, *mi amor!* not even once?" and before I could gather my scattered wits she had snapped her fingers and a tall, lanky youth in the garb of a clergyman approached, carrying an open prayer-

book and beaming with smiles. My newly acquired fiancée took a ring from a chain around her neck and slipped it on her finger and, giving me no time to object, took my hand in hers and stood in front of the minister. Dancers and promenaders swept by us unmindful, hawkers shouted, lights glared, and without Don to rescue me I was swept by Fate into this mysterious union. The man before us shot through a singsong chant, snapped the prayer-book shut, and held out his hand.

“Two pesos, please!” Hypnotized, I reached into my pocket and pulled out the coins, and my lovely wife held up her face to be kissed.

I undoubtedly started my married career on a wrong tack, because instead of embracing her I stood still and said, “Now, see here—” Never having married a Mexican before, I was a little surprised at the result, for her eyes suddenly flashed and with her heels she beat a rapid tattoo on the concrete pavement. I was under the impression that she was calling me a brute, but I could n’t be sure. When the tantrum had subsided, she took my arm again, but without the original tenderness, and literally ran me through the crowd of dancers, to a stall in the far corner labeled in large letters: DIVORCIO.

Two men stood here, with a big book open before them in which one was making notations. I spotted

the "frame-up" and stopped my companion. As well as I could, I explained in Spanish that I had n't wanted to marry her, but since she had insisted and I had done the only gentlemanly thing to do in the circumstances, I certainly was not going to divorce her at this stage of the game. My wife she was, and my wife she 'd stay. Then, quite satisfied with myself, I started to walk off.

With a wild scream, the girl grabbed me by the coat tail. Everybody about us stopped dancing and began to laugh; I could feel the crimson coming out in my face and neck and noticed the officer who had arrested me before, making her way toward us. The jig was up.

"Take your darn divorce!" I shouted in English, and one of the gentlemen behind the counter, understanding my facial expression, if no more, shoved a paper into my hand and said politely but unsmilingly:

"Five pesos, please!"

I looked at the girl, but she opened her mouth and I saw in her eyes that the scream would be repeated, so I opened my wallet and produced my last five pesos and handed them over. The veteran of many a more portentous battle had fallen at last.

I turned, a broken man, as my wife danced away, taking off her wedding-ring even as she left me—to find Don Stewart again at my elbow. He piloted

me out at last, but it probably was the luckiest inhibition of his life that he never so much as smiled once until we had climbed the whole long hill. By that time the exercise had made me a little more rational.

CHAPTER IX

THE BULL-RING

I THINK our superintendent was prouder of having built the bull-ring than he was of any of his achievements underground. There were two or three ardent "fight fans" among the Mexican officials in the office, who had convinced him of the need of an arena for the peace of mind of the native population, and he was intensely conceited about his work. The bull-ring was a sort of wooden bowl, perched on the very top of one of the steepest peaks to the east of the camp. There were no other buildings on this particular summit, and, plainly visible from the colony, the structure rested on the brow of the mountain, like a little white crown on a lonely monarch.

When I talked to the designer, I discovered that he took more pride in the location than in anything else about it.

"It is n't evident," he told me, "but it took head work to think out that site!" Since the spot was, probably, *the* most inaccessible in camp, I questioned him further.

“Well,” he explained, “suppose I had put it in the valley, so that the whole community could sit on its front doorstep and look down into the arena: where would your gate receipts be? It had to be on top of a hill, or we could not have charged admission. And then, too,” with a wink, “I ’d rather the men slept at home after the fight; and when you have been to one, you ’ll realize what a great help gravity is to us in handling the crowds!” I thought this very much the same philosophy that had put the “Alps” where they were.

The fights were held every Sunday, special trains of flat-cars, decorated with the national tricolor and looking like the observation train at a Yale-Harvard boat-race, being run up from the mill-town of Cobre. Performances were widely advertised during the week, a new company of fighters being imported for each occasion. In Mexico the profession of bull-fighting is highly organized, and there is a regular circuit, as on our vaudeville stage. There are also stock companies (an unintentional pun!) which spend a season in one town and then move on. The bulls used at Monte were local products from nearby ranches, and had to be brought to the scene of the battle a week before the fight, so exhausting was the trip up to the ring. After one climb, I appreciated the bull’s attitude: there is nothing one feels less like doing than fighting, after the ascent.

To an American it is well worth while to see at least one bull-fight—if only to convince oneself that one never wishes to see another. I had purposely delayed going until an auspicious occasion, and when I finally made my one and only trip it was with a very gay company. I had a New York boy and his wife visiting me, and as they refused to leave Mexico without having witnessed an exhibition of the national sport, which they might magnify from a distance in recounting their travels, we got up a party with the superintendent's family and a *débutante* from Boston who was staying with them. This last member was the finishing touch of correctness, for in every book on the exiled life of the young mining engineer there must be a beautiful girl from the East visiting the "chief," who gains her impressions of the great West from Sunday rides on horseback and picnics at twilight, on the desert.

Although one could almost have thrown a stone across into the pit, we had to start from the colony an hour before the opening performance in order to get down the hill and up the other side in time. At Monte, wherever one is going, one must first climb down to the bottom of the mountain and then up the side of another just as high, and as the altitude is very great and the air proportionately rare, the ascents are made at a snail's pace, the climber

dragging one foot after the other, out of breath from the start. I think the incessant climbing got on men's nerves as much as any other one thing in the life there; when I got back to the deserts of Arizona, the level ground felt much as *terra firma* does under one's feet after a long sea-voyage.

But if the spirit does not falter, all good climbs come to an end, and we finally reached the pride of the camp, part of a long winding column of natives—men, women, and children—grunting up to their national pastime. I had seen several rings, in the south of France, at Nîmes and elsewhere, but none so small as this one proved to be. It was n't over fifty feet in diameter, an exact circle with a vertical stockade of boarding ten feet high. There was only one entrance, leading directly into the ring, from which one climbed to the seats by ladders; after the gates were closed, there was no means of entrance or exit until the last bull were killed. To vault the back would have meant a drop of several hundred feet down the side of the hill.

“Choose your own exit and jump—do not run—if you want to get killed!” a fire-inspector's sign might have read.

When we arrived, the bowl was already nearly full of shouting, half-drunken Mexicans. That prefix “half” is to distinguish the condition of the audience before the battle from the state of intoxica-

tion attained by the end of it. We received a rousing ovation as we walked across the circle to mount to our "ring-side seats."

It was a wild-looking assemblage: men in the gaudiest of varicolored silk shirts (at ten dollars apiece, with the family starving), young girls in brilliant enveloping shawls, and fat matrons openly suckling their babies as they howled for the killing to begin. The more adventurous of the bloods sat astride the stockade, one foot hanging inside, to be withdrawn as the bull charged their way. The manager of the place, a fat old man under several yards of sombrero, strode up and down in the center, bellowing directions and brandishing a hammer with which he nailed up the entrance after the fight had begun. When the doors were secured, the only refuges for the fighters were little blinds, set at intervals around the ring, behind which they dodged in emergencies.

We had hardly gotten to our seats when there was a fanfare, from one bugler, and, breaking the silence that followed, the band, an inevitable adjunct to every occasion, struck up the national anthem. Impressively the portals were cleared and the parade of the fighters entered. In Spain this procession is a very spectacular affair, but by the time it reached Monte it had degenerated into a sort of burlesque of the real thing. However, the fighters

were beautifully arrayed, in regalia that looked as if it had been resurrected from an ancient trunk full of discarded fancy-dress costumes—all the orthodox gilt and flaming silk but a trifle tarnished.

First came the matador, the killer (who turned out to be a venerable-looking scoundrel of about seventy summers), followed by four banderilleros, whose function in life is to torment the bull, each with a gorgeous cape, the inside of which was an enraging red. Behind these came two horsemen, picadors, carrying long wooden lances, with a little knife like a pointed safety-razor blade struck on the end. They entered with a grand flourish, bowing profoundly, and, having circled the ring, drew up while their senescent leader made a long speech enlarging on the ancient formula, "We who are about to die, salute thee!"

Then the gates were closed and nailed fast, and the fun began. The banderilleros spread out, the horsemen having retired for the first inning of the game, and the matador, with all the dignity of his station and his years, drew in behind a blind and took a generous swig from a bottle of *tequila* passed down to him by an admiring spectator. This reinforcement from the gallery was repeated at intervals throughout the afternoon. Then a second fanfare, and a panel in the side of the arena opened and a bull emerged, evidently encouraged from the rear.

He was almost anything but a fighter, that first bull; he trotted obediently out in the middle of the inclosure, looked stupidly around, and closed his eyes. I think he had not had enough sleep the night before. One after another the tormentors approached him with elaborate caution and whisked their red capes in front of his nodding head. He opened one eye, but red was just as good a color as any other to that animal! At last the mob began to cry for more and better fighting, and one of the banderilleros was handed down two banderillas and instructed to start something.

The banderilla is a wooden stick about two feet long, decorated with paper frilling such as sometimes ornaments the harmless mutton-chop, and pointed with a wicked steel barb, about an inch long, sharpened to a razor edge. The correct banderillero, having bowed all around, takes his place in the center of the ring, grasps one instrument in each hand, and, holding his arms out above his head in a sort of Y, faces the bull. The brute should then charge him, the man standing perfectly still until the bull's horns are literally in his stomach. Then, reaching over the approaching horns, he plunges the darts into the animal's shoulders, with lightning rapidity. With the sudden pain, the bull will rear straight up and go wild with fury, having been diverted from

the man when the latter was not more than a few inches from destruction.

This particular bull, however, showed no inclination to charge, and could not be induced to move, so the poor fighter had to walk up to him, badly spoiling his pose, and jab him in the sides with the knives. This produced some action, but the animal appeared more annoyed than aroused, and the affair was such an anticlimax that the band began to play to divert the crowd. The ruse, however, was not successful, for a great chorus of protests arose, led by the village joker's sally: "You can't kill him with music!" and several people declared the animal to be their lost cow.

So at last, amid much shrugging of shoulders on the performers' part, the panel was again opened and the bull, showing his first signs of life for the afternoon, trotted happily back to his stall. There were to be six bulls killed, and the first four were in the nature of preliminaries. Unless they showed some fire they were returned uninjured, in hopes that less food and more rest might bring them vigor for the next week. The happy fate of these animals as long as they remained pacific is something militarists should think about, but it must be assumed that the bulls had thick enough skins not to mind the insults.

But the fifth bull did all that was expected of him. Encouraged by the ease of their first conquests (and by repeated doses from borrowed bottles), the second-rate troupe began to put a few frills into the business. Technical excellence demands that one man stand alone in the center of the ring when the bull is let in. The animal will charge straight for him, immediately, but if the man remains perfectly still the animal will be puzzled and stop, just short, to investigate. Should the man move the least little bit, however, all is lost. Good trick performers kneel or stand on their heads as an opening card, and on this occasion—probably because it required less sense of balance—our local artist took the former pose, alone out there in the “great open spaces.”

I was interested to see for myself what the bull's reaction to this would be, because I felt that assurance of “safety in statuary” might be useful to one pursued—say on the golf-course—by some wandering bull. But I suppose I shall never know whether an ordinary bull would stop or not. For this one came out of its corner (to use a boxing expression) like a maniac, took one glance around, and made for the kneeling figure, at a gallop. The hero, however, was much too quick a thinker to be caught: he realized at once that this bull was not of the same breed as those that had gone before. When the animal

was half-way across the arena, the man showed excellent judgment: he leaped to his feet and ran. And then, mind you, with the bull pawing the ground in absolute possession of the field, the fellow had the monumental nerve to peep out from behind the blind and bow his acknowledgment of the crowd's appreciation of his bravery!

The troupe went through the whole performance with that bull, and every one but the picador met with defeat. Why the banderillero was not killed, no one knows. He stood up most determinedly, reeling only a little from drink, and made a very pretty stab, but unfortunately he stopped, in the middle of the ring, to take off his hat. The darts diverted the beast for only about thirty seconds, and the man's performance was scheduled to last much longer than that. He was still bowing when, out of the corner of his eye, he saw the bull turn after him. He also took to his heels, but so sudden was his terror that he lost his sense of direction and ran—bang!—into the bare side of the wall. Apis looked at him a minute, lowered his horns and, with a horrible bellow, got under way again. The man spread-eagled against the wall, looking like a gaudy carpet tacked up for a beating, clawing vainly at the smooth surface. Two men above saved him. With considerable presence of mind they reached down and, grabbing his waving arms, heaved him

up. The bull's horns, flying skyward in a big sweep, scraped the sides of his shins!

Until now the performance had been a joke. I reproached myself for not having been to more fights, they were so entertaining. But at this stage it was decided that here was a bull worthy of the picador and, at a long blast from the trumpet, the main gate opened just wide enough to permit the man and steed to squeeze through. The spirit of the drama changed utterly. The horse was a hideous starved creature, scarred from half a dozen battles, and the panic which was shown in all his movements was suppressed only by the firm knees and silver spurs of the man astride him. There was something the matter with his head, but I did not understand until the superintendent whispered an explanation. In Spain the horses are blindfolded; here, to save the bother, one eye had been put out with a white-hot branding iron. Somehow the memory of the torture was engraved in the creature's remaining eye, always turned from the bull by the picador.

The man himself was young and rather dashing, with more daring than all the rest put together, but nothing could make up for the scene which ensued. First enraged with darts, repeatedly buried in its side and pulled out, until its flanks were covered with blood, the bull was attacked by the horseman. The picador had a perfect seat, standing in his stir-



ENTER THE IDOLS OF THE TOWN



THE PICADOR SCORES

rupts with leveled lance until the charging animal was almost upon him, then driving the blade into the beast's side and dropping into his saddle as the momentum of the attack sent horse and rider reeling back, until the torture was too much and the bull reared away in agony. Once or twice the man missed a clean hit and the monster went plunging on, throwing his opponents against the barricade and weaving his horns back and forth, gashing the horse's side. The picador, whose leg was heavily padded (while the horse was without armor), then kicked his boot free of the stirrup and, rising on the other foot, jabbed again and again—short, brutal blows—while the banderilleros attempted, with their capes, to divert the raging animal.

The crowd shrieked with delight, men pulling their hats off, waving them in the air, and throwing coins into the arena, and women shouting and tearing at one another in their excitement. I saw a mother snatch her baby from her breast and, in a frenzy, shake the infant in the air. The whole scene was in horrible contrast to the ridiculous slapstick comedy that had preceded it. The horse, one side slashed wide open and pouring blood, sank to its knees, trembling, and while the banderilleros made desperate efforts to distract the bull, the picador dismounted and literally dragged his pitiful steed up and to the door, through which, as it

opened, the poor creature half fell to safety and a week's respite before its next torture.

The aged matador stepped forward to end the fight. Watching the bull carefully with his wicked little eyes, he made a speech, telling the crowd that he was about to risk his life for "the entertainment of Monte and the glory of Mexico"! Then he drew, from under a dark-red scarf, a long, straight rapier and crept out to the center of the ring. For all his years, the old blackguard was skilful. There is a tremendous knack in the killing: the bull must be moving toward the matador, with its head down, and the man must reach across the horns and sink the blade in a space only a few inches wide, between the animal's shoulders.

The bull came on, a magnificent sight, head lowered, slowly at first, bellowing, and pawing the ground with sweeps that sent clouds of sand up behind him; and then, gradually gaining speed, he thundered down upon the old man. The final gesture was so quick the eye could hardly follow it: a flash of steel in the sunlight, a lurch, and the charging beast stopped dead in its tracks. Then the killer turned and, wiping the blood from his weapon, bowed solemnly and began to wander about the ring picking up the coins the rabble had thrown.

The bull stood quite still for a moment; then he began to wave his head slowly from side to side as

if trying to understand just what it was that had been done to him. He gave a hollow echo of his old bellow and feebly pawed the ground. Finally, first one leg and then another bent at the knee and he went down, blood oozing from the wounds in his back. His tongue came out and his eyes slowly glazed. On the ground he gave one weak shiver and, with a last heave of his flank, died—game to the very end; “framed” in his last and most splendid battle.

An overwhelming emotion struck me; I wanted to leap out of my seat, vault the railing, and fly at the tottering villain and wring his neck. I wanted to go into that arena and fight, with my bare fists, the whole crowd of cringing, salaaming cowards. They wanted to see a fight. Well, I wanted to show them a real one—no battle where half a dozen armed men tackled a dumb beast whose every move they could anticipate, but one where men stood up against men and the best fighter won. That bull seemed to me, lying there in his own blood, so infinitely much better than the whole reeking bunch of them that I felt he had won and not they, despite their drunken smiles and groveling in the dust for the silver that was thrown to them by their fellow-brutes!

No one who has not witnessed a bull-fight can realize the sordidness of the spectacle at its cheapest. It is overpowering. My friend's wife, who is not given to weeping, was in tears, pleading to be

taken away, but there was no escaping until the last bull was brought in. Perhaps if they had killed all six of the animals, we should have gotten used to the brutality of the performance, but I hope not. In the midst of these reflections, what was my surprise to hear a voice breathing rapturously in my ear:

“It was wonderful! But I want to see a really good one!”

I turned to find in this enthusiast none other than the little *débutante* from Boston! Her eyes were shining in a horrible way, and she was all athrill with what she had seen. It certainly takes a great many temperaments to make up a world—even an Anglo-Saxon one!

But I had little time to think, for once more the notes of the bugle split the air, and again the wooden gate opened to let in a new animal to be tortured. He trotted out over the pool of darkened blood which was all that remained to tell of his brother's glorious stand.

Again the ponderous posing, again the narrow escapes,—of drunkenness, not of courage,—and again a magnificent animal was about to be slain. But this time some local god with a sense of humor (and perhaps of shame) interposed.

The last bull had been as wild as his dead comrade and the brave toreadors as afraid of him,

when diversion came. In the arena, where the professionals dared not tarry more than a few seconds, appeared an amateur who put them all to shame. He was an old cow-man who could have matched the ancient matador in years, and his hair and a flowing beard were snowy white. But his spirit was young and he vaulted the stockade, tumbling down upon the field like a boy. The spectators were too intoxicated to be afraid for him: they cheered. He showed he was no bull-fighter by not even bowing to them. Instead, he went right up to the bull, which, goaded and bleeding, was pawing the ground with rage. Then, while half a dozen of the should-be warriors peeked out from behind their safe blinds, he had the audacity to seize the infuriated monster by the horns. The cheering subsided into a hollow gasp. I shut my eyes and saw in my imagination the broken and twisted remains of the foolish old man whom no one had had sense enough to stop.

When I opened my eyes again, bull and man, both, were on the ground. With one superhuman twist the cow-man had turned the animal's nose straight up into the air and tossed him off his balance. And now he sat upon the "terror of the toreadors" and grinned idiotically up at the surprised audience. In some trick way he had that animal so that it could not move. It was almost worth the whole afternoon to see the expressions

of the professionals as they came out and viewed the phenomenon.

It broke the bull's spirit, too. The old joker had spoilt the afternoon for any more serious bull-fighting. After his ruthless exposure of the relative strength of man and animal there was nothing left but to call it a day. We stumbled down the side of the mountain, exhausted by the violence of the two hours' emotions.

If the humor could only have drowned the memory of the butchery! But it made it the more terrible in retrospect. No: my *débutante* friend may want more, but for me never again, not even once!

CHAPTER X

A SUNDAY'S ADVENTURING

IN camp, my foreman and I had a regular ritual which we went through every morning, running roughly thus:

"And what day is this?"

"Monday."

"And how many days to Saturday?"

"Five."

"Good Lord! that 's too many!"

And so on through the week, until on Saturday morning the answer was:

"Thank Heaven; make it so!"

For on Saturday night only the devil cared how long we played poker, and on Sunday we could carry on with our work of interpreting the life of a mining engineer as depicted in all standard works of fiction.

Unfortunately, Sinclair Lewis and the other realists have neglected to give us their idea of what an engineer might be like, but the consensus of opinion of all romanticists points to a young Apollo of bronzed complexion and swaggering walk, clothed

in riding-breeches of English cut, spotless (except for the picturesque coating of dust after the day's gallop) riding-boots with shiny spurs, and a Stetson hat cocked at a jaunty angle. This attractive individual has no routine work whatever to do, and is associated with his job—a gigantic undertaking which goes its inspiring way unaided by the hero—only in moments of crisis, when he rushes in, six-shooter in hand (did I neglect to say that he always did his swaggering with a forty-five at his side?), and, with a few well chosen words, saves the whole business from ruin, relying on his own inherent ability to dominate the rest of mankind, and the great loyalty with which the said mankind repays his leadership, to pull him through.

With the exception of these high spots, which usually come in the tenth chapter, his life is spent riding across limitless plains and over insurmountable mountains on his trusty steed (a fiery Arabian mount, as loyal to him as are his men), and waiting for the heroine, who arrives in a private car just before the crisis, and whose nose is brought down from the high altitude to which it had ascended on meeting such a rough-and-ready gentleman, by her unbounded admiration of his manliness in handling the situation. His evenings, during the first nine chapters, have been spent cutting pictures of this lady out of the Sunday supplements of New York



DON STEWART RIDES FORTH



JOURNEY'S END AT THE NOLANS' RANCH

papers, in which his supplies from the States have come wrapped. These cuttings he secretes in the back of his watch, under the blotter on his desk, and, in fact, in every nook and corner of his gigantic estancia, so that, no matter what he does, he is constantly coming upon likenesses of his employer's daughter, whom he realizes his labors are supporting while her father sits idly smoking a Corona-Corona and toying with a ticker-tape in his drawing-room office on Wall Street.

Once the crisis is past, for the rest of the book this hero rides his Arabian firebrand, which instinctively feels its master's despair at being refused by the lady and saves the dead-locked situation by biting her horse until it runs away and then overtaking it and allowing the young man to lift the fair capitalist from the saddle as her steed is about to plunge into a bottomless cañon. Her life saved thus, the girl can do no less than marry the hard-working boy, but some of the sting of the dénouement is removed by the discovery that, all along, she has subconsciously been looking for an excuse to succumb.

As we obtained our Sunday supplements by the uninteresting medium of the daily mail, it was, of course, impossible for us to build up much romance on gleanings therefrom, but we could at least get ourselves up in the costume and on horseback, and there were plenty of "insurmountable mountains"

for us to practise on. So, often on Sunday we would have one of our "loyal workmen" send up some horses upon which we set forth in search of adventure.

Early in my stay I had been advised to procure some sort of revolver, and I had sent for my German lugger, feeling that at last I was to get color for a real story of adventure. I found, however, that there was a bit of irony connected with "packing a shooter." True, it is not safe to travel far from camp without a weapon, but the catch comes in the fact that one must not use it. Any one who is obviously unarmed is at the mercy of the first drunken Mexican who develops a complex about "gringos," but if the Mexican attacks, and one produces a concealed weapon and defends oneself, the next few years will, in all probability, be spent in a stinking dungeon, waiting for somebody to remember that Mexico is a free republic and that a man has a right to a trial. And even supposing this has been survived, one will be no asset thereafter to any well-regulated insurance company. However, if the Mexican shoots first (and accurately), he is at a distinct advantage, because he is used to living in places like the *carcel* and always has the chance of finding the door open and himself cut off from the comfort of being supported by the state.

So the solution left me was to get as big a gun

as possible, carry it in the most conspicuous place, and look as if I would use it on the first occasion. Then I had a fair guarantee that no one would make an issue of it.

The longest trip we took was a twenty-four-mile ride over the mountains to carry some ammunition to an American rancher who was a friend of Don Stewart's. We took with us a taciturn individual who headed the supply department and was known as "Lee" and contracted for two reliable (if not Arabian) horses and one mule.

We started out at sunrise, heading east from the camp, gotten up in our finest, with flapping revolvers, jangling spurs, and saddle-bags loaded with bottled beer. The trail we were to follow was a through highway to the river, the only connecting link between the Mexican town there and Monte and Cobre. It looked less like a highway than anything I could imagine, but was typical of the trails in that part of the country. Hardly two feet wide, scratched into the sides of the mountains, around which it crawled, it opened up a new vista at each twist. For several miles it wandered in and out and finally came abruptly to the foot of an enormous peak and apparently ended. Don, astride the mule, was in the lead, and I saw the plucky little animal attack that big brute of a mountain without a second's hesitation. It started almost straight up the side, follow-

ing a suggestion of a zigzag trail, but at an angle of well over forty-five degrees. Now, I had learned to ride on polo ponies, and in their way they are pretty dextrous, but I knew what they were good for and I knew that that mountain would have finished them. How, then, could this long, lanky sketch of a horse of mine ever make the grade?

Fortunately, I did not stop to discuss the matter, because in the next few minutes I made a discovery. My horse was a cross between an elevator and a fly and traveled as easily straight up into the air as on the level. I found myself sitting on the back of my Mexican saddle, upright, but with my body absolutely parallel with the horse's back. Moreover, I glanced down at the trail and perceived that all semblance of order had gone from it and that it was a bed of loose stone, so that at every step the animal dislodged a young land-slide—but still kept plowing away, lifting me momentarily higher, until the valley we had left became no more than a tiny indentation in the earth's surface.

At the top of the climb I had a glorious surprise in store for me. The trail came out on a saddle which divided the mountainous desert, in the center of which the camp was situated, from the basin through which the river ran. Standing on this ridge, I looked behind me at the country in which I had discovered Monte, and then turned to gaze ahead over what

might have been a representation of Paradise: a long, winding valley, its sides rich with waving green trees, a gleam here and there through the foliage at the bottom, where the sunlight caught the stream that trickled down the center—all under a cloudless sky of deepest azure. From this distance the whole valley appeared to be carpeted with the softest of fresh green, in vivid contrast to the arid surface of the land we had just left.

We paused a minute to rest the horses and marvel at the beauty of the view, and then descended into the valley, which went under the pleasant title of "*Virtud Cañon*," the Cañon of Virtue. My elevator-horse was as good at going down hill as up, and cantered down amid the flying rocks without a single misstep. Midway of the descent I dropped a little leather whip I had with me, and, dismounting to climb back a few feet for it, I found I could hardly walk, so treacherous was the ground. For every step up, it seemed I slipped back two! And yet the horse, with me on its back, could travel over that same deceptive ground and never hesitate or falter. Of horses as well as men there are many kinds!

The descent into the valley disclosed the fact that the softness apparent from the summit was an illusion bred of distance, for the ground was dry and cracked; but trees there were, and a brook wandering back and forth across the flat arroyo bed. De-

void of underbrush but spotted with pleasant shade-trees, the little valley had the air of a deserted park. At every turn, I expected to come upon nurses and perambulators.

The sight of the trees was in itself gratifying, for we never realize how much their foliage is a part of our satisfaction with life until we live a while without them. The meeting of such childhood acquaintances once more is like renewing old friendships. There was the most extraordinary combinations of species, too; in this promised land all were friends, for two tall trees guarded the entrance to one part, on one side a stately pine and on the other a graceful palm—the representatives of two worlds come hither to this quiet corner to meet in conference.

Such musings were, however, hardly in order, because at the time I was enjoying what are familiarly known as the “tortures of the damned.” Never having ridden in a Mexican saddle before, I had not thought it necessary to inquire of the man from whom I had gotten the outfit whether or not the thing would fit me; I was n’t used to being fitted for my saddle. The one I had acquired was a heavy leather thing with high back and the conventional bucking-board square across the front under the pommel. The distance between these two immovable bulwarks was just ten inches. I could get down

into it all right, but it held me as in a vise, with the corners of the front board biting into my legs.

The first few miles this seat was uncomfortable, the next distinctly painful, and thereafter almost unendurable; and most of the time from then on I had to ride standing up, like a heroic statue of a general leading his troops. I dwell on my experience as a warning to any unsuspecting equestrian who may meet this device of the Inquisition, which might be called the "leather maiden"—as painful as the old iron one. It is also interesting that the ride through the cañon was so fascinating that it actually did lift me above the physical pain, or at least so it seems in memory, looking back on it from the soft retreat of a comfortable desk-chair.

In the whole twenty-four miles, we passed but one sign of life, a half-dozen Mexicans camped amid the rusty wreckage of a deserted mine. Abandoned by the corporation which operated Monte, this mine still contained rock enough to furnish a living to a few miners, who worked it entirely by hand, packing the ore out on their backs.

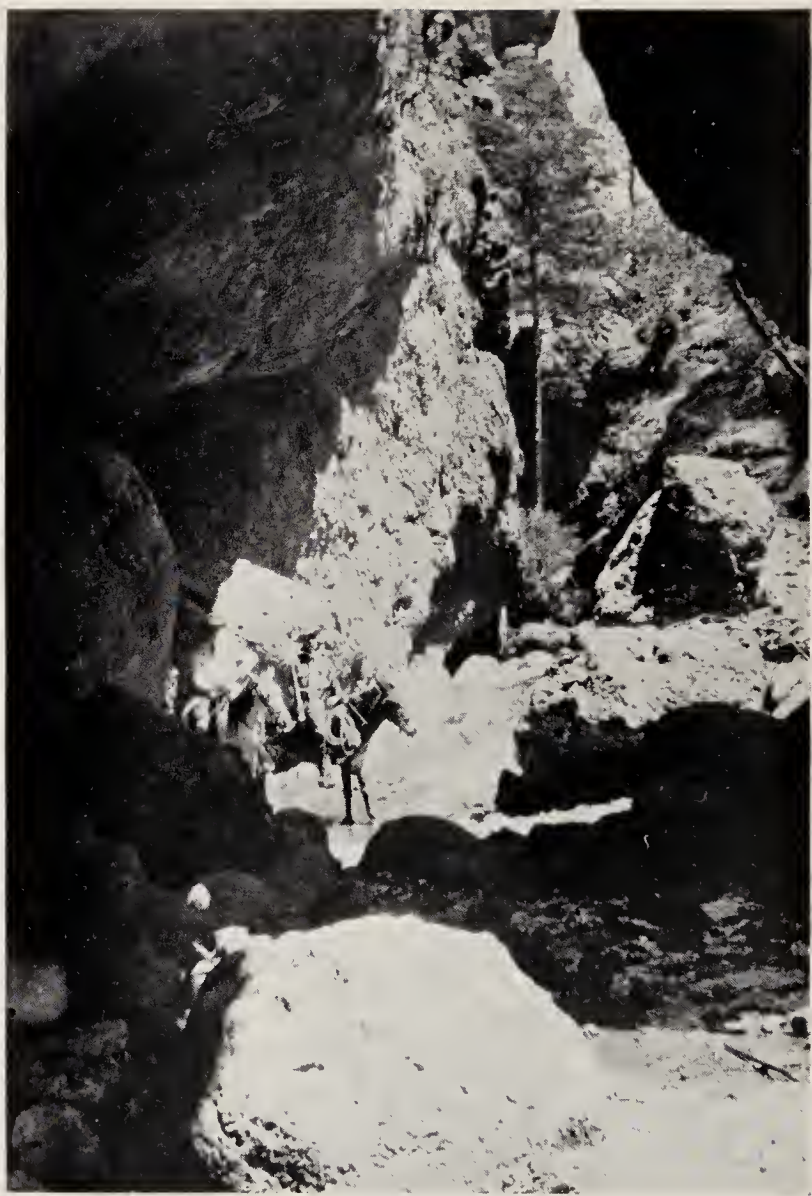
The cañon continued to be exceptionally beautiful, its walls now rolling mountain-sides, now steep cliffs of brick-red rock, glowing faintly in their nakedness. At one place the sides arched together over the stream and we rode for a quarter of a mile through a giant cave, several hundred feet high,

the clatter of our horses' hoofs' awakening hollow echoes.

Late in the afternoon, when my physical discomfort was rapidly gaining on my æsthetic appreciation, and when I had begun to see, in every clump of bushes, houses that might be our goal and put an end to my misery, we finally rounded a spur and came out on a broad plain which sloped down to the river beyond. Nestled under the mountains, as if seeking their protection, we found the ranch.

It consisted of a knocked-together house hiding under a thick coat of some clinging vine, a thatched out-building, and a frame stable in the corral, where a dozen horses circled idly about. We rode in, and I had my initiation in the etiquette of calling at a ranch a-horseback. A long wooden railing ran along the front of the stable, three or four feet above the ground, and, watching to discover what the Romans did, that I might do likewise, I found this rail to be the key to the situation. One must ride alongside it, dismount, and take off saddle and blankets and place them on the rail. Then one lets one's horse loose to play with the others and goes about one's business. It is as much a matter of course as ringing the door-bell of a town house.

When I had manœvered my way through this procedure, not without some question in my mind as to how I was to capture my animal again, our



VIRTUD CANON

Don and Lee pause to admire a bit of light and shade on a Sunday's adventure

host appeared and welcomed us. He was a midget of a man, burnt black, with his legs in the prettiest bow, and he spoke in the slowest of drawls, with a total lack of humor.

We had not eaten anything all day. Of course we were not expected, and without comment the rancher, whose name was Malone, led us to where a table and bench stood under a huge oak-tree. There was a prodigious bustling in the main house, and through the open door I saw a trunk dragged out of one corner and opened, and something fished out from the bottom. The object turned out to be a white-silk table-cloth, heavily embroidered, probably worth hundreds of dollars in the States. This was spread on the board table in our honor (and despite our protests), and presently an elderly Mexican woman with a kindly, smiling face appeared, laden down with food. With the beer, rescued from the saddlebags and cooled in a spring back of the house, a feast was made.

The Mexican woman was Mrs. Malone, and after dinner she and her husband escorted us to a thatched building which proved a sort of permanent summer-house, in which they slept. We talked for several hours, Malone puffing the American cigarettes we gave him, just as fast as he could draw breath. Although we presented him with the two packages we had with us, he must have smoked the forty while

we were still with him, so great was his smoke-appetite after his own home-made cigarettes. Between puffs I tried to get some story of his life and how he lived so far from civilization, for he made trips so lengthy as that to Monte and Cobre only every six or eight months.

His life was an exceedingly full one, for he had several hundred Mexicans working for him all over the country-side. One gang was running a mine on a lease from the company, another was lumbering, cutting the scraggly little trees, hardly taller than a man, to be used for "lagging" in the mine at Monte. He collected mineral specimens to ship to the United States, had a large herd of cattle on the range, bred horses, gardened and carpentered, and was a great sportsman. His half-breed son, an ungainly, stupid-looking hulk of humanity, did most of the work, and so the elder Malone devoted his time to hunting and fishing. The ammunition we brought him was for a forty-five revolver and I had imagined it to be for self-protection, but what was my surprise when he told us that with the weapon he kept the ranch supplied with deer meat, shooting from the saddle up to one hundred yards. I refused to believe it, but the statement was corroborated afterward by men who had been with him! Fishing he was even more enthusiastic about, but he had his own ideas of sport.

"I can't see," he drawled, "how these fellers get any real enjoyment out of fishin' with a hook. It don't seem like it was a real game!" I asked him what he considered the correct technique. "Well, there ain't no other way to fish proper like, exceptin' with dynamite. Boy! there 's sport for ye!"

It developed that when he wanted fish he took his whole family to the river with him, armed with a few sticks of high explosive and some fuses. The family would then undress and form in two groups, one on each bank, while the head of the house tossed a quarter of a stick into a quiet pool and awaited results. The explosion, if it worked, would not kill the fish but merely stun them, and they would rise to the surface for a few minutes before they were swept down-stream or came to and swam off. This was where the family came in. The minute the powder went off, they all dived in and captured the fish.

"Sometimes the big uns 'll sink, and then ye have to dive for 'em or feel in the mud with yer toes."

It seemed to be the personal contact with the quarry that appealed; hooks and lines were such useless refinements, besides doing away with the element of individual touch. I remember certain lectures by my father, who is an enthusiastic dry-fly fisherman. He used to tell me of the unsportsman-like conduct of wretches who used worms instead of

relying on imitation bait, and I thought to myself how truly is all virtue comparative.

Throughout our talk, Mrs. Malone, who had that faculty common to Mexican women married to Americans, of understanding English without being able or confident enough to speak it, sat beside her husband, holding one of his hands in hers and patting it with the other. Her eyes shone with dog-like affection, which the old rancher accepted as a matter of course. As they had been married twenty years, I should have liked to ask him the secret of his obvious success in his experiment in nuptial happiness, but I hardly thought it would be proper to do so.

When the time finally came for us to leave, I received the rest of my lesson in the convention of calling in the wilderness. Our horses had been fed and, with a dozen or so of the owner's, were circling around the corral. Malone led the way to the end of the fence on which the saddles were parked, and each of my companions picked up one of the braided rope lariats which hung there. Wanting nothing so much as to make a good showing, I chose one and, trying to recall all the performances of Will Rogers that I had seen at the "Follies" began to swing it around my head. No one made any comment, but, standing aside, my host watched me with solemn eyes.

I got the rope swinging beautifully, but the trouble was that the more I circled it above my head, the faster the horses galloped around the inclosure, until I grew dizzy trying to follow them. Moreover, my horse, having been in similar situations before, had burrowed into the very center of the group. I made three desperate and undeniably clumsy tries, my rope shooting out like a whip and landing in the dust behind the now terrified horses.

At last my audience could contain itself no longer, and burst into roars of laughter. Not too long on temper, by this time, I stepped back and told my host to catch the darned animal himself: I did n't really want him; I was sore from riding him, anyway. He smiled, and, taking my place, gave the rope a simple twist as it hung by his side. Then with a short underhand swing he sent it out, widening, as it went, into a loop which seemed to dodge in and out among the horses' necks and, finding the one it sought, settled over it.

"Thet swingin' it over yer head goes fine on exhibition, but, if ye really want to get the horse, don't make no move: it jest scares 'em. Quiet like, and up and over!" As in the case of most things that are well done, the idea was less flourish and better skill.

I was thankful that at least I knew how to saddle, and at last we were off, my hideous engine of tor-

ture again under me. We left the ranch with but a few hours of daylight ahead of us, laden with letters hastily written for us to carry out, and soon began to overtake the traffic on the highway. The trail, which had been deserted in the morning, was now spaced with travelers who evidently had waited for the heat of the day to pass before they set out. There were long strings of pack-burros, laden with wood and hay and vegetables, Mexican ranchers in elaborate outfits, silver-trimmed and on beautiful horses, and we caught up to and passed one caravan.

This caravan consisted of a train of some thirty animals. At the head rode two men on horseback, armed to the teeth, with two revolvers and a gun apiece; and behind them several children, from ten to twelve years old, astride burros. After them, the pack-animals, two trunks, each as large as a wardrobe, hunched up on their backs, watched over by peons in big sombreros and with sandaled feet who trotted alongside. Bringing up the rear were the women folk.

The women were all very large and fat and had discarded their habitual black for cooler white on the journey. Bundled up, side-saddle-fashion on diminutive burros, they looked like haystacks covered with white tarpaulins. Perched behind each one, and hanging on for dear life to what little of the burro's back there was left, rode a child. Evidently,

there was no race-suicide in this family. Another armed man closed the procession. As we trotted by, each woman covered her face with one of the loose folds of her sheet, evidently afraid that we should be overcome by the sight of such beauty blooming alone in the desert.

Night came upon us half-way back, and for a while I admit I was nervous about my horse finding its way. But we could n't miss the trail, for to go ten feet off it, would have been to run into the side of the cañon, and there were eyes in my steed's feet which found a safe landing-place with each step.

So I settled myself to endure the tortures of my saddle and to think up new names for the inventor of the contraption, and for the man who, knowing my size, had given me the misfit. I did n't have to eat off the mantelpiece when I got in,—I had n't touched the saddle enough for that,—but that front board put a bow in my legs which I fear I have n't yet lost.

But Sundays were not all of this care-free sort. Many mines work seven days a week, and, as if to prove that there were no modern innovations that we had not at least tried, the engineering department put in a good many extra days.

A pleasant sport known as "shaft-plumbing" was the cause of it all. As the ore at Monte was being

taken out, new depths were constantly being explored, and the shaft had already been sunk four hundred feet below the lowest mining-level. It then became necessary for the engineers to find out what was what at the bottom of this hole and to set lines so that the lowest workings would be directly under those above and connections could be made accurately.

To do this, we let down two piano wires with heavy weights on the ends. The line of the wires is known above, and a transit telescope is worked on the same line below. It 's all very simple in theory, but means many hours of patient effort and considerable profanity in practice. For shafts usually rain torrents of water and handfuls of high-speed pebbles, and four-hundred-foot piano wires snap when one looks at them. We had to work Sundays, because then we could stop the hoisting above, and have at least a fighting chance to save our heads from falling rock.

I remember the first Sunday we went down, because the bitterness of standing in the cage and watching a perfect spring morning—just made for tennis and the doing of nothing at all—disappear as we dropped, made a strong impression on me. Of course we turned the top of our heads toward perfect days all through the week, but there's some psychological something about Sunday, and man's

inherent right to it, that makes all the difference in the world.

However, we were a happy-go-lucky crew—eight engineers and as many *ayudantes*, in armor dry and caked from the preceding day's work—and we made an adventure of it. Eighteen hundred feet straight down through the rock, and then we were ready for the four hundred more in the "burro." "Burro" was the nickname for the little iron saucepan at the end of a string that dangled in the downward extension of the shaft. While half the party worked at the top, with the other half I was detailed to go below in this thing.

Eighteen shower baths couldn't have poured more water on us than that shaft. The ground water of a thousand feet was seeping into it and falling on us; for the burro had no hat on. The burro had no sides, either, and we had to hang to one another when the hoist-man took off the brakes and let us go.

Lights went out—*pst!*—and left darkness, and iron clanking against rock. We battered back and forth and clung together more tightly. Heating arrangements in the shower were very poor. The water was icy. At last a thump told us we were at the bottom, and we clambered out into the protection of the little cave that had been hollowed there.

If we had been in an apartment-house, I should say we had reached the furnace room. For, after the shaft, windy and cold, this unventilated pocket was an inferno for heat.

I think I 've never felt so cut off from the world as I did that morning at the bottom of twenty-two hundred feet of man-made gopher-hole. The monotonous, deadening sweep of the shaft rain; the flat heat of the air, a heat fed direct from the eternal fires below us; the choking smallness of the little cave—it was all most oppressive. Except for a thin bell-rope, we were completely cut off from those above.

For two hours we waited, and at the end of that time the first piano wire came wiggling down out of the darkness. Another hour, and another wire. We could go ahead with our work. This was to place a telescope, with cross-hairs within, in the exact line of the two wires. That sounds easy. It takes only about three hundred trials, with men relieving one another, as they get “bat-eyed” from looking too long at the fine-traced threads in the instrument. I must have an exceptionally bad disposition, because every time I sat down after a turn and closed my eyes, a vision of that sunlit tennis-court, half a mile above us, came to me, and the “God of Things as They Ought to Be” hung his head.

But when it was done at last, and the burro ride

taken once more, the weirdness of that tiny oven on the devil's hearth began to appeal. One of the most comforting facts of human psychology is that no matter how unpleasant an experience is, at the time, let a few hours roll by and the good points all begin to emerge. Romance is born of what was sordid; bravery of perils fled. The longer I was out of that hole, the more I enjoyed having been in it. But I can't say it helped much when we had to go down again the next Sunday—and forego a trip to Cobre to play golf. Romance is an elusive thing: one can't fold it up and put it in one's pocket to take out and admire when the spirit wills.

CHAPTER XI

LIFE IN EXILE

FROM the beginning of my stay on the hill, I had the feeling that we were all living on a ship; and a ship which was sailing on a mission so momentous that no one dared speak of his goal beyond the cryptic remark, "We are at Monte for only a while, you know!" To see the same people day after day, to eat with them, work and play with them, and have no way of escaping them, heightened the analogy, as did the fact that the personnel seemed to have been chosen entirely at random and the passenger-list included men and women who had no more in common than the circumstance of being on the same voyage. The dormitory, where we bachelors lived, added a few physical details, for it had a veranda around it which was paced as regularly as any boat's deck.

We slept on a second-story porch, screened from insects, and this too heightened the illusion, because the one drawback to an otherwise perfect weather record were the terrific winds which began in early spring and kept up steadily, with surpris-

ing intensity, for several months. At night these conscientious hurricanes would gain such velocity that they literally picked the light frame of the sleeping quarters up in their arms and tossed it about. I would feel my couch rising and falling under me, and my ears were filled with the melancholy whistling of the wind through the screens, for all the world like an Atlantic gale rushing through the rigging.

I even thought that our voyage was a good deal like Noah's, for he too knew not whither he went but only that he could not get off, and he must have experienced all the difficulties, caused by family feuds, which were the bane of our superintendent's existence.

The routine on board was monotonously regular during the week. Up at six o'clock in the dark, and down the hill. I have always held that one of the things God expressly did not intend man to do was to get up before the sun; why, else, did He arrange that people should not be able to see in the dark? But perhaps that is beside the point, for with the perverseness of human nature, after the sun finally did appear, wandering in over the mountains about half-past seven, we took one good look at it and then went underground, where it could be seen no more! And when we finally came up, it was to shut ourselves up in a stuffy office with outdoors calling,

not from the other end of an hour's train ride, as in a city, but from a distance no greater than the thickness of the wooden prison walls we had built around ourselves.

But even prisoners escape, and at four-thirty we fled, usually to the *cantina*. There we gave a daily demonstration of the powers of what Don Stewart called "The Great Equalizer," which in this case was the very excellent beer of Hermosillo. The attendance at the *cantina* was pretty much the same from day to day. First there was the old English engineer of the Diesel compressors, who introduced himself as a "bloody Diesel-wiper who 's talked with kings before you was born, sonny!" He always opened the session by ordering the first round and shouting, " 'T ain't often we kill a pig! *Uno, dos, tres . . . cinco* beers, Pete!"

Beside him sat the "old-time foreman," who also had known the world before it went to the devil. He was a big, bent hulk of a man, marked with the scars of many accidents, who had adopted Mexico as his country after years of roving, demanding little beyond the deference which, as a white man, he received from the natives. A miner and no more, anywhere else, in this foreign land he was the czar among his men; a good example of a relic of pioneer days, he was reminiscent, kindly, and marvelously and beautifully profane.

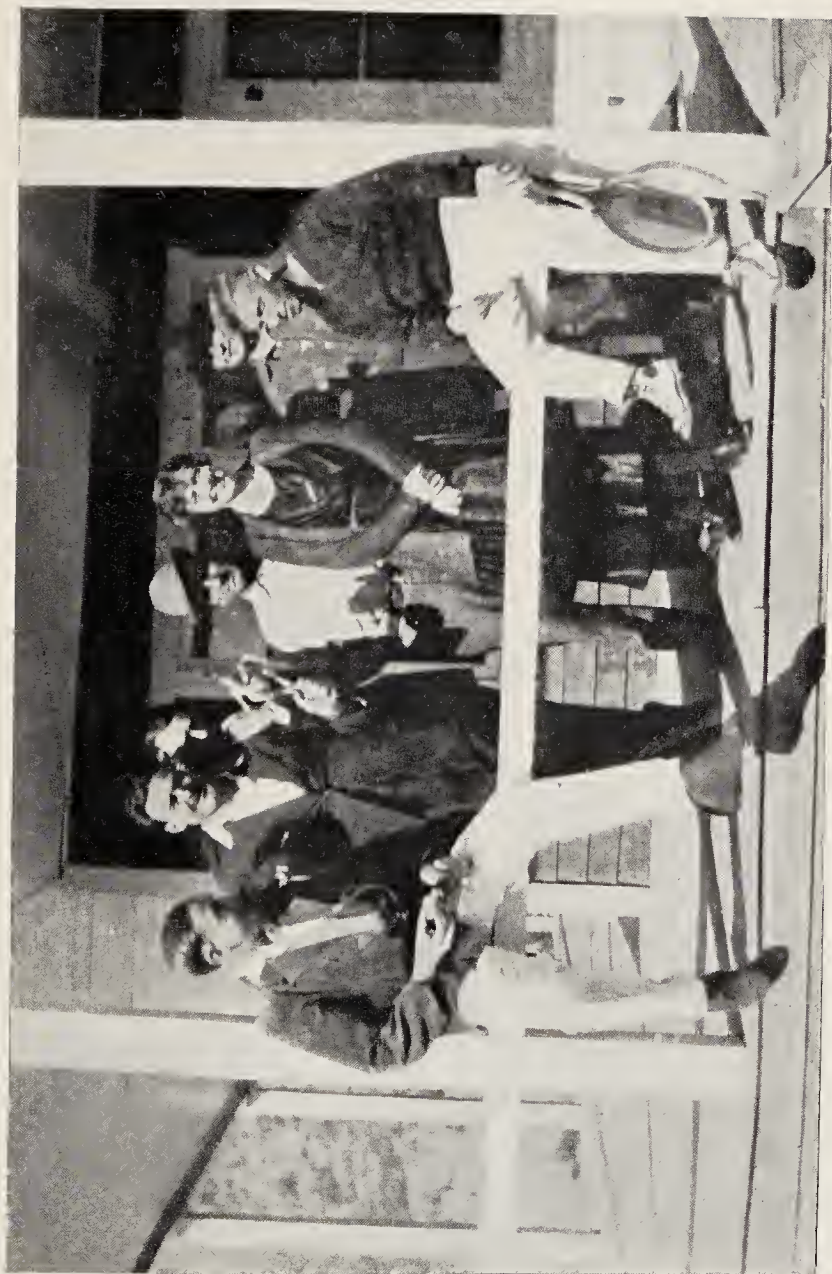
By his side, sitting at the feet of wisdom, sprawled the "young engineer." Graduated from a middle-Western mining school, fleeing from the vague discontent of the age, or satisfying some hidden spark of adventure, he had left his fireside and wandered down into Mexico to learn his trade and discover what a sorry imitation of the real thing is the mining taught in schools. Perhaps some day he would be like the older man beside him, whose style of conversation he copied; or perhaps there was a stronger flame within him which would carry him on until, from a desk chair in an office below Brooklyn Bridge, Monte would appear rosy in the distance.

The next member of the group was the "heavy-drinking clerk." Here was Main Street desperately fighting to be free, taking alcohol for an ally and riding forth on the wings its fumes provided. He was a pale-faced youth, despite the climate, slight of build, and dressed in the latest of syndicated fashions from mail-order houses. Only thirty, he had been in nearly every corner of the globe—South America, Africa, Alaska; and Europe, in the months when he had found himself during the Great War. The war had taken him and fitted him in, but with its conclusion he was demobilized out of his uniform and back into his habits. He spent all his capital to get to Chile, and fell into a job in

a mine office. With a new shop, all was put in order, and he felt that at last here was a community that he belonged to. Then, little by little, the sameness of it conquered him as he learned that the new-found friends who welcomed him, a new face, so warmly, were only human, and that it took them but a month or two to hear all that he had to say and to tell him all they knew. So he stayed until he had put by another nest-egg and then lost it, rambling on to far-off Africa.

There the same performance was repeated, alcohol and ennui going hand in hand, until he was thoroughly satiated and waited only to buy himself a new field. Alaska, the States once more, and now Mexico. Before I left, he was off again, this time to another part of South America, on a wandering, untiring search for the Grail of Content. The elements of it may have been in himself, but he could not see them, and so he would go on, a vagabond, drifting and drinking, until the ability of a soaked vessel to hold wine and a few stories to tell would be all there was left. He was a typical member of the shifting population of a mining-camp.

And finally there was Harry, the other Englishman, blown into camp by a stray breeze, surrounded with three trunks, two golf-bags, and a crate of pictures of the girls he had left behind him. His trunks had disgorged equipment for every climate,



OF A SUNDAY MORNING AT THE DORMITORY

from pole to pole, in mufti and in uniform, and his conversation soon made it evident that he had used it all. When we learned that he was the youngest son of a British family, it was the finishing touch; no gathering in a foreign country is complete without one such.

The conversation of the miscellaneous group was intensely interesting, for in their peregrinations the various members had penetrated every out-of-the-way nook on this sphere; and the talk would fly familiarly about, from the sunny Bay of Naples, with its smoking sentinel that is Vesuvius, to the fever-traps of the equator, and pass lightly on to an incident with the gray sky and blue-white glaciers of Alaska for its background.

The *cantina* we favored (which became known as the "American Club") had a veranda that hung over the side of the mountain, so that we sat with our feet up on the railing and looked dreamily out on the purpling prospect of the ranges as the sun, tired out from its long trip across the sky, dropped wearily into the couch of hills that it had covered with sheets of gold and crimson against its rest. In the spring, when the valley was covered with the blossoms of innumerable peach-trees, and the stringed band was playing softly in the plaza below, the charm of our view defied description. The petty cliques of the town above and the sordid poverty at

our feet were forgotten, and only beauty, pure and eternal, remained, to soothe the battered spirit of the old pioneer and to fill the heart of the young miner with dreams of his future. The little clerk was all that he might have been, and I think Harry was back in England, filled with that pleasant melancholy which is the result of a gnawing Wanderlust.

As for me, I am afraid I thought of a flaming sunset seen at the end of a brown-stone cañon in a far-off city, and the smell of gasolene and hot asphalt seemed to saturate the air. The roar of the shops turned into the dull vibration of the city's traffic; the gleam of the sun in the tiny windows of the houses opposite were only the electric signs on Broadway, twinkling an invitation to see the greatest hit of the year.

From such pleasant things it was a rude awakening to have to plod up the hill to "chow." There were two positions in camp in the filling of which everybody on the mountain-top took an interest. One was that of the school-teacher, and the other was the cook's. Not only did most of our discontent lie at the latter's door, but he was one side of a grand battle which was waged for months. The week after I got to camp the position changed hands for the first time. We had had a Chinaman whose idea of a staple dinner was one which had for its *pièce de resistance* what we called "Chinese pasties." They

consisted of balls of dough, about the size of a fist, soaked in grease and fried. They had no flavoring, no filling, no sauce, only their leaden selves to recommend them. The superintendent, fearing the men would be so laden down with these concoctions that re-ascent from the bottom of the mine would be impossible, dispensed with his services and imported the Joneses.

The Joneses were a newly married couple. He was ugly, dirty, ill-dressed, sly, and conceited, and given to the most heinous exaggeration. She was no improvement in looks and had a kaleidoscopic face which, when she shook it up, ran through contortions expressing the whole gamut of human emotions, from good-humored tolerance to fanatic vindictiveness. However, they could cook, and we were considerably relieved at the disappearance of Oriental conceptions of Western diet and settled down to get some pleasure out of our meals.

The Joneses saw to it that we did not stay settled long. They at once contended that catering for the Saturday dances was not in their contract, and, when the clamor of the ladies had died down, made deathless enemies of all the males in camp by refusing to serve Sunday breakfast after eight o'clock. It is impossible to realize what bitter depths of feeling such little things can awaken, unless one has lived in a small isolated community; cooking or no cook-

ing, in a month Monte had had enough of the Joneses.

But there was no obvious way of getting rid of them, and daily they got more on every one's nerves. They finally settled the situation, themselves. As long as they were united, the enmity of the entire community could not budge them, but at the end of another month civil war set in. Jones had a grandson born to him by the daughter of an earlier marriage. On the afternoon of the great event he appeared, with the telegram in his hand, at our evening beer-imbibing session, and bought a bottle of cognac with which to celebrate.

After two or three drinks it came out that all was not so rosy in the enemy's camp as might have been supposed. Jones admitted that he had been putting up with his wife's idiosyncrasies merely out of a sentimental regard for a young bride, but he declared, after another drink, that it was high time he established his own undoubted superiority. I am ashamed to say we clapped him on the back and said, "By all means uphold the honor of the masculine sex." However, he was not a pleasant drinking companion, so we left him to his determination and went on up the hill.

Mrs. Jones had gotten dinner alone that night, and the Mexican girl who served it brought out, from the kitchen, reports of an electrical tension in

the heated air. About the middle of dinner, Jones himself appeared at the front door, having come straight up from where we had left him, the now empty cognac bottle in one hand, and his other hand clenching and unclenching in a manner which indicated a mental struggle. He stood by the entrance for several minutes, and a look of great determination came into his eyes: he had found himself at last! Without speaking to any one, he made a bee-line for the kitchen. All interest in the meal was suspended. There was a dead hush, during which we looked at one another in hopeful silence and waited. Results were intensely gratifying to the lover of melodrama.

Ten seconds of waiting and then a scream! Rose, the waitress, flying as if for her life, came through the swinging doors from the back and collapsed in tears of fright on one of the tables. In the half-second the doors were open, I got a clear picture of the scene beyond. Jones, the bottle still in one hand, was crouched in front of the stove, a hideous expression on his face. His other hand, which had been so nervous, was frozen on the handle of a long, bloody butcher's knife. He was swaying very slightly and seemed poised to strike. I could not see Mrs. Jones, but, terrified lest murder had been done, I sprang up.

No need! There was a terrific crash which

sounded remarkably like breaking china, and the doors trembled. Another and another followed, with veritable machine-gun rapidity, and the doors came open again to allow the ferocious Mr. Jones to make a startling exit. Knife and bottle were still in his hands, but they were held over his head in a protective pose, and he was running. Moreover, the sole shot we saw fired was a heavy coffee cup of the one-arm-lunch variety, which came with him, only at so much greater velocity that it passed him easily and landed on the floor on the other side of the room. So heavily built was it that beyond the loss of its stub of a handle it survived its voyage unscarred. No wonder Jones was routed by a bombardment with such ammunition! Mrs. Jones followed, but halted in the middle of the room. I should enjoy repeating her remarks to her rapidly vanishing husband, word for word, but the necessary censoring would take so much of the beauty and fire from them that I hardly think what remained would do her justice.

One would have thought that with an opening engagement as tremendous as this, the war would have been of short duration, but for some reason, Jones, sobering up, even if he lacked the spirit to strike again, had retained most of his determination, in a sly, sullen way. Nor had Mrs. Jones followed up her victory, but soon after had given up to fem-

inine tears and told one of the matrons of the camp that she had been driven to retaliation only after she had been "beaten to a pulp." These changes in attitude brought the couple again to nearly an equal basis, as regards military strength and morale, but war had been declared and they settled down to a siege which lasted a month. Mrs. Jones's plan of campaign centered on an endeavor to cut Mr. Jones off from his base of supplies, which was the *cantina*, and Mr. Jones put all his energy into devising means for running the blockade.

The camp was, of course, intensely interested, and the betting ran high at even money, but the consensus of desire was that it would end in double murder. We all wished, however, that they would "make it snappy," for, they being intent on their own affairs, the Chinese kitchen boy now prepared all the meals for them, and, with characteristic Chinese reverence for his elders, he reverted to the style of his previous boss and the famous "pasty" reappeared. This phlegmatic youth, who we felt would be our death, was the one who finally saved us.

For, wearied of inaction, but not daring to tackle each other, the Joneses attacked poor Chung. The Oriental worm turns without warning. After the third encounter, Chung came up one morning with a revolver in his sleeve and indulged in a little

target practice, using his master and mistress for bull's eyes. Perhaps if he had confined his efforts to one or the other, he would have done better, but, endeavoring to annihilate both, he hit neither, and presently was seen peacefully descending the hill, having run out of ammunition. United by their common danger, Mr. and Mrs. Jones left town the next day.

With the close of this excitement, I found myself somewhat at a loss for a topic of local interest until one day Don introduced me to the youngsters of the camp, of whom he was very fond. There were ten or twelve children on the mountain, mostly girls, and they had very little in the way of entertainment, since Mah Jong was a bit difficult for most of them and their youth forbade participation in the beer-drinking. So Don had more or less adopted the bunch of them, ranging from three or four years to twelve, and was exceedingly popular with them. He took me on as assistant, and Sunday afternoons we used to hold Field Day in front of the dormitory.

When Easter came, we planned a surprise for the children and induced a great number of Easter bunnies to come to Monte and lay eggs where they might be found. The bunnies obligingly left us over fifty, for we counted them particularly. Satisfied that all was well, we slept on our information and the next

afternoon gathered all the children in camp together and started them out on their search.

They scampered off up the side of the hill and with shrieks of excitement went after the hidden treasures. Hither and thither they flew, and we stood below, shouting directions. But five, ten, twenty minutes passed, and not an egg was found. As we had emphasized the fact that rabbits laid in a very restricted area, about a hundred feet square, and had seen with our own eyes what they had left, we knew something was radically wrong and joined the hunt ourselves. In a thorough search, during which we got almost as excited as the children, we found—a half-dozen! But where were the rest? We held a hasty conference, each suspicious of the other's knowledge, until the real culprits gave themselves away. From down the slope came a chorus of bleatings, and we turned to see a herd of goats coming up the hill for a second search. It had been Easter for them, too! It took much explaining, and more ice-cream, to appease the children whom we had so mercilessly deceived.

The position of school-teacher to these youngsters was one which attracted much attention. There seemed to be but one reason for a girl's coming to this out-of-the-way spot, and that was hardly teaching; it was too easy a way to pick up a convenient

husband, with a fair variety to choose from. Of the married women at Monte, over half had been school-teachers. Any girl who feels that a husband is essential to her happiness, had better pack her trunk, take the next train for the Southwest, and announce her calling to be that of a teacher. Whether or not she can teach anything is entirely immaterial; in fact, judging from the successes I have seen, it would be probably just as well if she knew nothing at all!

She need not even be pretty: men who have not seen a woman of their own race for a year are not entirely normal. They are like most men in the first stages of intoxication, except that, so long as they remain in camp, the effect will not wear off or degenerate into baser instincts. They will marry any one or anything that comes their way and will have them. When I got back from camp, I had to be very careful to call on the least prepossessing of my feminine acquaintances first and gradually work up, until I had regained the strength to say more than a dozen words to a pretty girl without proposing to her.

But that is aside. The school-teacher at Monte was newly arrived from Missouri. She was a very pretty girl and, once initiated, could manage a host of callers at her diminutive house with a composure I defy the Fifth Avenue *débutante* to equal.

She was the only unmarried girl in camp, her predecessor having annexed the general foreman of the mine, after he had withstood the attacks of teachers over a period of twenty years. Her growing popularity even bit into the ranks of our serious drinkers, because she held high tea at four-thirty and her house was on the main pathway leading from the office. Any sunset one could find half a dozen young engineers and clerks grouped in languid, adoring poses on her front doorstep, waiting to be passed a cup of lukewarm tea from the already crowded interior. It seemed a shame that she had to pay her board by the month, for every night there were ten men anxious to escort her to dinner at the one Mexican restaurant which was within the bounds of public approval.

I regret she did not get along so well with the matrons of the camp, who were inclined to call her names which I felt were slightly extravagant, and which I might have suspected were inspired by jealousy—if I hadn't been so sure of the absolute virtue of women who had themselves once been in the very position this girl held. A serious fracture nearly took place after she had been with us some time. One of the machinists was blessed with a red-headed wife of ample proportions, and a freckled youngster who had picked up his vocabulary from his father, around the shops. One day, in

school, he got into some mix-up with the fair instructress, who was herself of generous build and possessed of no mean physical power, acquired on the farm in Missouri. The boy, slightly irritated, told her what he thought of her, in terms vigorous but out of place, and she took him by the nape of the neck and administered a physical rebuke. His screams were heard by his gentle mother, who lived not far from the school, and she hastened to the scene of the struggle. The cause of the disturbance was instantly forgotten, and personalities of those old enough to know better entered into the argument, which, from all accounts, degenerated into a "free for all," not even the Marquis of Queensbury's rules being observed.

But the physical side of the encounter was the least important, for people are very near the fundamentals when cooped up in isolated communities, and such incidents are likely to occur. It was what followed that mattered, for when the merit of the contestants came into general discussion in camp, it was found that a sharp line could be drawn between those who believed the school-teacher entirely in the right and those who held that nothing could be said for her and that she ought to be discharged for her conduct.

Curiously enough, the first party included every man in camp and not a single woman, and the sec-

ond, therefore, was one hundred percent feminine. But, as luck would have it, civil war again saved the day, for, perhaps from having been worked up by her encounter, or possibly because of some stand taken by her husband that evening, Mrs. Machinist and Mr. Machinist staged the second physical engagement that Monte saw that day, and Mr. Machinist, although used to throwing hundred-and-eighty-pound drills around, was discovered at ten that night drinking down his sorrow in the *cantina*, with a discolored optic. Mrs. Machinist left in the morning, and Mr. Machinist was heard to say something very like "Thank God!" when she disappeared into the tunnel. The lesson of this last sad tale is on the order of "Be sure you love before you leap—into Monte!" There is no test of one's relations with one's fellow-men — and women — like the wilderness!

CHAPTER XII

DOWN THE HILL

THE Americans of Monte had what I used to call the "exile attitude." Cut off from the rest of the world as these people were, certain attitudes toward life seemed to flourish particularly well among them; and, entirely aside from their social status, one could divide them into groups, each of which had developed a different way of looking at life.

First, there were those who lived almost entirely in the past, most of them women, who, unsuited to the wilderness and having no common ground with any one in camp beyond the fact that they were all there together, filled their minds with a morbid glorification of the past. Since it was undoubtedly gone forever, they could perform all the mental gymnastics with it they chose, and build for themselves a beautiful dream world which they could contemplate in pleasant melancholy.

Then there were those whose pasts were buried—pasts so drab that they could not look back, or so happy that memory itself was pain. Still, they dis-

liked the lives they were leading and looked forward to the day when they would be up and away. These were the truly pathetic ones, for the first class was so absorbed in self-pity as to forfeit sympathy. They were chained to life; had gone too far along the road to be able to turn back or to cut for themselves another groove, and, like the heavy-drinking clerk, drifted on from camp to camp, always pushing toward a future which was in their minds alone and never would be reality.

The third class comprised those peculiar individuals to whom the life was suited, and who fitted in as no psychoanalysis could fit them in elsewhere. People who live either wholly in their past or wholly in the future necessarily live a life within themselves, and in their intercourse with the rest of the world cannot be whole personalities, because so large a part of them is locked away in their heads. They play at being interested in the people around them and in the things those people do, but they are only peeping over the wall they have built around themselves. It is the man who lives in to-day, no matter how well he may have planned his future, who is gregarious, and whom one meets and lives with and goes away from with the impression that one has known a real person.

The men who love the life in a mining-camp—and they appear to be fewer than they ought to be—have

somehow developed a unique attitude. I asked one engineer who seemed particularly attached to his life with us, what it was that held him.

“Mainly,” he said, “it ’s getting back to civilization!”

“But, good Heavens!” I answered; “if you care so much for being in civilization, surely you can go and live where you wish.” (He was a single man.)

He laughed when I said this and replied that it was not living in the crowded places, but the *getting back* to them that he wanted.

“The thrill of going out after you have been in here a year is worth every second of the three hundred and sixty-five days—to feel the world around you again, to jingle new money in your pocket and have nothing before you but one grand and glorious bat. But I want to get the money spent, once the riot is over, and I think I enjoy it infinitely more when it ’s done; I muse over it for months afterward. I never stay long: just up to the point where I feel my illusions of the gayety of the city beginning to totter. If those illusions ever went, then I don’t believe I ’d have a thing left to live for. I know I ’m fooling myself, but it *is* gay when you only see it once a year. There ’s just enough excitement to last about two weeks, and those people who live there try to spread it out over a whole year; that ’s why they get cynical about it. But when you



PERSHING DRIVE
The American Colony's one and only street



BUY YOUR FUEL SUPPLY EARLY
Unloading a burro train of firewood on the trail up to the American Colony

have done nothing but work for a year and seen few faces around you, then nothing in the world can compare to the delight of tasting all that you have been denied!"

He was quite right, in a way: I know that I shall never forget the first week after I got out, and it was spent in a little border town. New York never afforded the thrills that the border cabarets of Arizona gave me!

But, along with this attitude, most of the men who like the job have other things which help to hold them. There is always the satisfaction that goes with constructive work. My first instructor loved the romance of the darkness underground; the old miners lived on the gratification they derived from consciousness of their superiority to the Mexicans, and one or two had a true pioneer's worship of endless mountains and limitless skies. These people, their lives ordered, lived and grew prosperous; the others—the great majority, the turn-over indicated—drifted on and on, less content with each new place to which they went, but gaining some consolation from the appeasing of their Wanderlust. One or two there were, and no more, who loved their work for its own sake, and who would go up the ladder hand over hand until they reached the top, whether they cared for the present or no.

The evolution of the industry on the hill had de-

veloped some queer jobs for the men who ran it. I have often wondered why more mine superintendents are not chosen for foreign diplomatic posts. No class of men in the world can be more silent; for the value of the mine, the statistics of its operation, and its geology are locked in the superintendent's head, and no man on earth can pump them out of him. With that as a fundamental characteristic, the head of a big mine has a training in diplomacy and etiquette equal to that of the greatest masters of Europe.

Imagine yourself with half a dozen houses on your hands, and as many married couples to allot them to. The houses are identical in every respect, but of course cannot all occupy the same spot, and so their location is bound to prove the fly in the ointment when it comes to assigning them. Moreover, the salaries of the men involved probably differ as much as twenty dollars a month. Think of the consternation of A.'s wife at being given a house farther down the hill than Mrs. B., when A. gets fifteen dollars a month more than B. (and has a much better brain!); and picture to yourself how happy will be the relations between A. and B. during their stay in camp. Then, if you have not had enough drama, ask some of the couples to dinner (if you want real trouble, don't ask them at all!); and if your wife's cook can get in touch with the rest

of the culinary departments in camp, get her to tell you what they think of your having the C's before the B's, and giving the A's a cold supper when those cheap little D's came for a full Sunday dinner. And note how well the men pull together after their wives have been nagging at them all the night before!

You do not need kid gloves with which to handle people, in such circumstances; you need silk ones of the very finest quality, and, equipped with these, you must work with the most delicate touch. And even then Mrs. E. will say that it is a perfect shame that her friend Mrs. X. from the border (wife of the mill manager there), whom she has been trying, for years, to persuade to visit her, has to stay with you (although Heaven knows you hate the sight of her) because she must be a guest of the company, and you are the official host. And Mr. W. will be sullen for three weeks because you had a director of the company (who is a terrible bore and sticks a finger in everything that does not concern him) visiting you, and so you could n't take in his fiancée the only possible time she could get down to see him! By all laws of logic, superintendents should end either at the Court of St. James or in the insane-asylum!

While the superintendent received his education in diplomacy the poor doctor had to content himself with being a merchant. True, he did some doctoring too, although causes too far-reaching and too old to

be under his control made his practice discouraging, but I think the most interesting part of his job—the part which interests all doctors who are good at it—was the collecting of fees. The company paid him a salary, and illness which could be traced to the mine he cared for gratis, but he was allowed to have a practice of his own and it was with this that he had his fun. For, obviously, since the women spent their daily allowance on the first essentials of life, and the bread-winners drank up what was left, there was very little with which to pay doctors' bills.

Almost every one, however, owned some kind of live stock, and when the up-keep of the animals became too much of a tax, the logical solution was to settle the problem and the physician's bill at the same time and turn the stock over to him. What splendid training for one whose profession is noted for its lack of business ability! Two or three settlements might come in to the doctor in a day, so that by evening he would find himself the proud possessor of four cows, a moth-eaten bull, a litter of pigs, and perhaps half a hundred hens. He would then have to take the next day off and go down into market and find out the prevailing prices; and after he had satisfied himself as to the value of his acquisitions, he still had to find purchasers and drive his bargains.

One doctor who had never spoken a word of Spanish before he came to camp, six months later was one of our best scholars, purely from carrying on his business of converting live stock into cash. Moreover, he had learned his lesson in trade as well as in Spanish, and I think made as much more again from bartering as from his regular fees. I once saw him talking with a man, and at a distance they both looked so pained and were talking so earnestly that I thought at once that they must be discussing a very serious case. As I drew nearer, the Mexican threw his hands into the air and a look of such tragic resignation came over his face as he turned away that I felt how much the worst part of a medical man's profession it must be to see the suffering in the faces of his patients. What was my amazement, when I went up to condole with the doctor on the evident loss of another patient, to find him wreathed in smiles and to have him grab my arm and rush me off to celebrate the conclusion of a bargain which he had just made to his distinct profit. The expression on the faces of the two men had been a part of the business etiquette of the country.

But the strangest job of any man in camp was that of the employment agent. At his desk he saw perhaps ten men a day, but he was a busy man, for all of that, as his marriage bureau took up most of his time. I think I have mentioned the fact that

the company had to support the widows of the men who were killed in the mine, and that the obligation entailed no small expense. However, in the interpretation of the law, it ceased if the widows took to themselves other protectors, and so the sooner they were married again the better for every one concerned. Espagne, who was the agent, was given the task of bringing these deserving widows into touch with equally deserving lonesome men. He arranged meetings, spread propaganda, and took a fatherly interest in the *affaires d'amour* of his protégées.

Over the virtue of the lone widow, Espagne watched with an eagle eye, and at the first suggestion of scandal he made it plain to the gentleman involved that the only honorable course was to marry the lady; and that, incidentally, men without honor were not wanted in the employ of the company. Moreover, he was a sort of traffic officer, his red sign being for those who had never taken the step, and thus clearing the road for those dependent upon the company. It is doubtful whether the débutantes of Monte entirely approved of him, but of the gratitude of the widows there is no question: they would much rather remain in Monte with a legitimate protector than drift to Mexico City, where they were entitled to go, with the possibility of none at all.

I think the greatest appeal of life in exile is the opportunity to see little comedies like this work out;

to be able to watch them as it would be impossible to do in a city. It is like having people in a laboratory, where one can regulate conditions and watch the progress of an experiment. There are two ways of experimenting in psychology: take one individual and try the effects of a number of different stimuli; or, given a number of persons, submit them to the same set of circumstances and note the different reactions. For the latter experiment, Monte was almost ideal. Every one had the same kind of life to lead, the same problems to work out, and each met in his own way the lot Fate meted out to him. And here, so far from the rest of the world, an intensity was developed which left little question of what was going on in the mind of each.

It was not until the time finally came for me to leave Monte that I realized the full depths of feeling of the people among whom I had been living. As long as one is a permanent member of a community, the facilities for obtaining confidences are limited. True, there are always those who are looking for some one with whom to share their crosses and crowns of thorns, and who need no more than a kind word to cause them to let one into the innermost chambers of their hearts; but the normal individual is wary of telling too much to any one whom he is bound to see every day of his life for an indefinite time to come. But once everybody knows that

one is going, not for a few days or weeks, but for the rest of time, one becomes a community confidant. All the festering complexes in which the psychologist loves to probe, have an outlet—a perfectly safe outlet; for without the flimsy guarantee of a promise it is known that these confidences will go no farther and will never come back.

I had noticed this once or twice before, when I had left camps, but never had I had so many cards placed on the table before me at one time. A few—the men whom I spoke of as obviously fitting into the life at Monte—stood out as having no more on their conscience than to buy a round of drinks before I left; but the others, in their conversation the week before I said a final good-by, touched depths of discontent that amazed me.

And scandal! I learned that one of the most venerable of the officials had come to camp three months before his wife and had proposed to four ladies before the sad fact of his attachment became known; that two families had n't been speaking for a month because one had been asked to a certain dinner, and not the other; that ninety percent of the men in camp considered themselves underpaid, and every other man ridiculously over-valued.

But these tales were merely the pleasantries with which the members of any society amuse one an-

other, and with which they salt their somewhat tasteless conversation, and what amused me most was the universal attitude toward my own poor little home town, New York. No one seemed to be able to understand why I was going there. What in the world could New York afford that Monte lacked? Besides, it was such a step backward to go East: was not the center of civilization already west of the Mississippi? No one paid any more attention to what New York said or did, and I should soon be disgusted with its sordidness, and long for the wide open spaces.

But, by the way, since I *was* going there (here I was taken to one side), would it be a great deal of trouble to find out what kind of favors were being given at the parties there? And just drop a line and tell where the trinkets most in vogue could be sent for—cheap things, you know, that could be had for two or three dollars, so as to show Mrs. Jones (who gave the dullest parties, anyhow) just what really smart people were doing. Oh, and if you do *have* to go, let us know if they are really playing Mah Jong there, or if the papers have just sold it to us on advertising; and do they play bridge for money, and do the girls actually smoke, and drink gin out of a bottle, sitting on a table in a cabaret, with their skirts over their knees? The writing of this reminds

me that I really must take a night off and look up these things, because I am afraid I have overlooked the places my friends knew so much about.

When at last the day came for me to go, the sincerity of a few more than made up for the others, and it is of these, who know the city and the wilderness and who have chosen the latter, that I like to think. They are the people who own the West, and not the malcontents who scorn what they have never seen but for no very evident reason seem always to desire. As one of the oldest of the foremen said:

“I don’t belong back there, and I do here, but I wish to God you ’d take some of these amateur pioneers back with you, so they could tell New York how much they like Mexico; they would, you know. I think they ’d be so convincing that a right nice lot of people would up and come out!”

And with this last confidence I took my bags in my hands and boarded the cage, giving the order to the level of the tunnel, for the last time. At the bottom, I climbed upon the end of an ore-train and went flying out from under the mountain. When we came to the tunnel entrance and I set out on the motor bound for Cobre, the sun had just set, and as we swept down the curving scenic railway the little lights of Monte, high up in the sky above me, twinkled a last farewell. In the clear, soft air of evening, all memories of the petty strife of human

beings, plodding away according to their destinies, seemed to be dispelled, and only the spirit of great men doing great things remained. The thought of the mountain, hollowed out and made into metal that linked men together over miles of desert, that sheathed the bottoms of ships that sailed the seven seas, that covered the roofs of palaces and factories, filled me with the inspiration of it all, and left me with the conviction that however a man may speak of his neighbor, or however he may spend his money, if he has put his shoulder to the wheel, he has lived and been a man. And the men at Monte, Americans and Mexicans alike, had put their shoulders to a mighty wheel and turned it well.

The spinning wheels of my motor screeched on the winding steel of the track and the lights of the colony, twinkling above, swayed in the sky and nodded ascent. Then with the next curve, the whole mountain stepped silently behind the lesser hill we circled, and I saw Monte no more!

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